THE CRISIS IN HOMELESSNESS: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDREDTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, FEBRUARY 24, 1987

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THE CRISIS IN HOMELESSNESS: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY, 24, 1987

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES,
Washington, DC.

The Select Committee met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m., in room 311, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. George Miller presiding.

Members Present: Representatives Miller, Schroeder, Boxer, Sikorski, Durbin, Coats, Johnson, Wortley, and Holloway.

Staff present: Ann Rosewater, staff director; Jill Kagan, professional staff; Sheila M. Pacheco, congressional fellow; Mark Souder, minority staff director; Darcy Coulson Reed, minority research staff; and Joan Godley, committee clerk.

Chairman MILLER. The Committee will stand adjourned from its previous meeting, and the Committee will now come to order for the purposes of conducting the hearing on the crisis in homelessness and its effects on children and families.

In this country, we have always taken for granted that every American, no matter how affluent or impoverished, has a roof over their head.

In the America of 1987, however, this is simply not the case.

Over the past few years, we have begun to recognize that thousands of our citizens lack basic shelter, but we assume that those who are homeless are middle-aged men and women, displaced by institutions or ravaged by chronic alcoholism. We assume as well that this is a temporary emergency situation.

In the America of 1987, this, too, is simply not true.

For both our cities and our suburbs, homeless populations have become a permanent fact of life.

And whether resulting from the scarcity of affordable housing, or the inadequacy of public benefits, or a lack of jobs, or an increase in family crises—or some combination of these—the reality is that a significant portion of this nation's homeless population are families with children. Forty percent of the homeless are children and families, according to the U.S. Conference of Mayors' recent study.

Contrary to common perception, homelessness among families knows no geographic boundaries; it is not limited to inner cities, or to one region of the country. In prospering Contra Costa County in California, which I represent—one of the wealthiest counties in the state with a median income of over $23,000, where almost 32,000 new jobs were created in the last few years—thousands, perhaps as many as 10,000 individuals, are homeless. Many of these are families with children and many cannot find temporary shelter even for a single night.

All too often these families may find themselves with nowhere to live but in their cars, or in abandoned buildings, or on the street.

In and around the few shelters, hotels or temporary facilities available for homeless families, drug abuse, crime and prostitution are everyday occurrences. In the past two weeks alone, two fatal shootings have been reported in New York City hotels which house the homeless.

Tragically, these are places we have asked families with children to call "home"—some for months at a time.

Nearly four years ago, when the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families visited New York City's Hotel Martinique, there was an indication that this hotel was providing a temporary solution to the city's homeless families. Now this "welfare" hotel, and many others, have become permanent fixtures on that city's landscape.

We have heard—and we will learn more today—about the unsafe and crowded living conditions that exist in temporary living quarters for homeless families and their children. Frequently, families with three or four children are sharing one small room; rarely are these rooms equipped with kitchen facilities. Even hot plates to warm food are often prohibited.

We will learn that homelessness results in families splitting up and in many instances children being placed in foster care rather than remaining with their parents.

And we will learn how homelessness keeps children out of school, or if they are lucky, driven from their emergency shelters to their schools by police vans. If they are able to find transportation to school, when they return to the shelters, they are rarely lucky enough to have a quiet place to do their homework.

As today's hearing will demonstrate, homelessness is threatening the physical health and safety of thousands of children; it is placing them at risk of serious developmental delays and academic failure; and it is stretching the fabric of family life to its limits.

Emergency or temporary shelters are no substitute for a home. Until families are assured a safe and adequate place to live, there is much work to be done.

I hope that today's testimony will bring us to a greater awareness and understanding of how the crisis of homelessness is placing American children and families at risk.

[Opening statement of Mr. Miller follows:]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. GEORGE MILLER, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AND CHAIRMAN, SELECT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES

We have always taken for granted in this country that every American, no matter how affluent or impoverished, has a roof over their head.

In the America of 1987, however, that is simply not the case.

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Emergency or temporary shelters are no substitute for a home. Until families are assured a safe and adequate place to live, there is much work to be done.

I hope today's testimony will bring us to a greater awareness and understanding of how the crisis of homelessness is placing American children and families at risk.

THE CRISIS IN HOMELESSNESS: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

A FACT SHEET

Homelessness among families with children is increasing

Estimates of the number of homeless in America range from as few as 250,000 (HUD, 1983) to as many as 2.5 million (Hombs and Synder, 1982), with estimated annual increases in homelessness ranging from 10% to 38% (GAO, 1985.) Families with children are the fastest increasing homeless group and now comprise nearly 38% of all homeless persons in the U.S. (U.S. Conference of Mayors [U.S.C.M.], December, 1986.)

In all but two of 25 cities surveyed, the number of families with children requesting emergency shelter increased between 1985 and 1986. The increases ranged from 46% in Louisville, 40% in Detroit, 30% in Los Angeles and Seattle, and 20% in New York City, Norfolk, San Francisco and Trenton, to 5% in San Antonio. (U.S.C.M, 1986)

Families with children comprise 76% of the homeless population in New York City, 52% in Portland, 50% in Philadelphia, Trenton and Yonkers, 40% in Chicago and Kansas City, and 35% in Seattle. Families comprise 20% or more of the homeless population in Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco. (U.S.C.M., 1986)

In the first eight months of 1984, suburban Nassau County, Long Island, one of the wealthiest communities in the nation, housed 724 homeless families. Neighboring Suffolk County served 919 families just in the first six months of 1986. (Brandwein, 1986)

Shelters for families very limited

Emergency shelters able to serve families are particularly lacking in 70% of the surveyed cities including Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Louisville, Phoenix, Seattle, Philadelphia, Portland, and Los Angeles. (U.S.C.M., 1986).

The existing shelter in New York City consists mainly of congregate, barrack-style shelters and single-room occupancy hotels which are inadequate to meet the needs of the 15,000 family members, including 10,000 children currently in need of emergency shelter in New York. (Committee on Government Operations [Gov. Ops.], House of Representatives, 1986)

The estimated number of homeless families in Massachusetts ranges from 600-2,000. On any given night, the maximum capacity family shelters can serve is approximately 200 families. Presently 425-450 families are housed by the state in hotels and motels. (Gallagher, 1986)

A Los Angeles County, California shelter with room for six families receives more than 150 calls from homeless families each week; another L.A. shelter which can house two or three families receives 40-50 calls per day. In Alameda County, shelter operators have stated that in a given week they receive requests for three times as many beds as they have available. In Sonoma County, fewer than half of the homeless families can be accommodated. (Roberts and Henry, 1986)

Children and teen parents account for significant portion of the homeless

Nearly 50% of the homeless parents seeking shelter during 1985 in Boston were between the ages of 17 and 25 years. (The Emergency Shelter Commission [ESC] and the United Community Planning Corporation [UCPC], Boston, April, 1986)

This winter, 20% of the families admitted to a San Antonio shelter were headed by teen parents. Fourteen percent of those admitted were under 21. (San Antonio Metropolitan Ministry Shelter, San Antonio, Texas, 1987)

In Boston, nearly half (46.5%) of the children in family shelters were under five years old, and of these 13.2% were infants under one. School-age children comprised the remaining 53.5%; ages 12–17 years old comprised 11.7%. (ESC and UCPC, 1986)

Limited affordable housing, insufficient AFDC grants contribute to family homelessness

Families are a large percentage of the two and a half million people who are displaced from their homes every year as a result of eviction, revitalization projects, economic development plans and spiraling rent inflation. One-half million low rent dwellings continue to be lost each year as a result of condominium conversions, abandonment, arson and demolition. (Gov. Ops., 1986)

Nationally, it has been estimated that by 1985 there were twice as many low-income households as there were low-cost housing units; in California, the ratio of low-income households to low-cost housing units in 1985 was four to one. (National Low-Income Housing Coalition, 1986; McChesney, 1987)

Between 1970 and 1980, available housing in Detroit decreased by 11% or by 58,696 units, more than in any other U.S. city. (Michigan Housing Coalition, 1985)

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) is the primary source of income for over 80% of homeless families in Boston; the current monthly benefit for an AFDC family of three is about $575, less than the least expensive two bedroom apartment listed in Dorchester, Massachusetts (Boston neighborhood) in Fall, 1985. (ESC and UCPC, Boston, April 1986)

In Michigan the highest possible AFDC shelter allowance is only 45% of fair market rent value. In California, the 1985 monthly AFDC benefit for a mother with one child is $448, compared to $491, the median rent for a one bedroom apartment in Los Angeles. (Michigan Task Force on the Homeless, March, 1986; McChesney, 1987)

Homeless families are sheltered in unsafe and inadequate settings

Many shelters and hotels used as emergency shelters for homeless families with children are located in dangerous neighborhoods, where criminal activity such as prostitution and illegal drug dealing is not uncommon. (Gov. Ops., 1986)

The Legal Aid Society of New York found that homeless families in one shelter had been exposed to lead and asbestos contamination. At one hotel in New York, officials found nearly 1,000 violations of health, building and housing codes. (Gov. Ops., 1986)

The motels in suburban Suffolk County, Long Island, used to house homeless families, provide no telephones in the rooms, and no daily housekeeping services. Families are crowded in one room, with no playground for the children; few kitchen facilities; often isolated from friends and family; without a car or public transportation; and with their children exposed to motel residents who may be transients, prostitutes, or substance abusers. (Brandwein, 1986)

In New York, 70% of families living in hotel shelters lacked refrigerators and had no cooking facilities. The majority of hotel families eat cold food in their rooms chilled in coolers, toilet tanks or sinks. (Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, 1984)

In 1985, about one-third of the sick infants in New York's single-room occupancy hotels were without cribs in their rooms. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 1985)

Homeless infants and children suffer serious health consequences; some have died

Seven of the 89 child abuse-related fatalities in New York City in 1985 were children living in welfare hotels. (Human Resources Administration, Public Child Fatality Review Committee Report, New York, December, 1986)

During 1982 and 1983, the proportion of low birthweight babies (under 2500 gms.) born to pregnant women living in 10 New York City hotels for the homeless was more than twice as high (18.0%) as for women in the city as a whole (8.5%). Over half of the homeless women had minimal or no prenatal care. (New York City Department of Health, 1984)

Between Spring, 1985 and December, 1986, the rate of chronic health conditions among the 1,028 homeless children seen in health programs nationally was 16%, nearly twice the rate observed among ambulatory children in general. (Wright, 1987)

Gastroenteritis, often cause by the ingestion of harmful bacteria from stale infant formula and unsterilized bottles, is one of the most common reasons for homeless infants being admitted to hospitals. Other serious complications such as weight loss, infected diaper rashes, and staph infections among infants are also requiring expensive medical care and follow-up. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 1985)

Development delays, academic and emotional problems affecting educational progress for homeless children

In one study of homeless children in Massachusetts, developmental delays were present in 47% of the children aged 5 years or younger, and 33% had two or more developmental lags. These included dependent behavior, aggression, shortened attention span, withdrawal and demanding behavior. They also exhibited problems with sleep, coordination, fear of new things, and speech difficulties. (Bassuk, 1986)

In St. Louis, homeless children are displaying cognitive and developmental problems at three times that of the general child population. When tested, 80% of the children displayed significant language deprivation, an important predictor of school success. (Whitman, 1987)

In a study of homeless children ages 6 to 11 residing in Massachusetts shelters, 66% of the boys and almost 50% of the girls required further psychiatric and medical evaluation. Fifty-one percent of the children older than five were depressed and most stated that they had suicidal thoughts. (Bassuk, 1986)

In addition to irregular school attendance, parents reported that almost 25% of the homeless children in Massachusetts were failing or performing below average; 25% were in special classes; and 43% had already repeated one grade. Sixty percent of homeless children studied exhibited high levels of anxiety and depression which interfered with their capacity to learn. (Bassuk, 1986)

Chairman **Miller**. Mr. Coats.

Mr. **Coats**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased that the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families is conducting a hearing this morning, to address the effects of homelessness on children and families. The experience of homelessness is most assuredly traumatizing, no matter how long the duration. Thus, such an experience can produce multiple effects. This we can take as a given.

However, I hope we can broaden the scope of our hearing to discuss not only the effects of homelessness, but also the causes. Just how do people end up homeless, and what are the contributing factors?

If we focus too narrowly on the resulting effects of homelessness, we are not truly dealing with the issue. Effects are the end result of a series of events which left these children and families with few options open to them. What is needed is to analyze the process more closely, beginning with the root of the dilemma, namely, what caused these people to be homeless in the first place? Could it be lack of low-income housing, unemployment, under-employment, incompatibility with whom they previously lived or inability to obtain help from available services, just through not understanding where those services are and how those services can be obtained?

All of these questions need to be more thoroughly examined.

In researching this issue, it became evident that homeless families would appear to have more behavioral and psychological problems than similar, non-homeless families. I would be particularly interested to hear any of the witnesses address this issue. Perhaps the increase in the number of homeless families is due in part to the increase in the numbers of these troubled families. Could such families be finding it difficult to adapt to the problem of the tight housing market?

A study by the Office of Policy and Economic Research of the Human Resources Administration in New York records differences between homeless and non-homeless poor families, which I found of interest.

The distinguishable differing traits were: homeless families did not pay much more in rent than non-homeless AFDC and AFDC-UP families do; and homeless families moved an average of three times in six years, compared with 1.3 moves for non-homeless AFDC families.

These findings lead me to believe that there is much more involved than just being poor and in need of financial assistance. Just what these variables are that contribute to being homeless I trust will be discussed in today's hearing.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking forward to hearing the testimony of the witnesses before us. Also, I would request the customary two weeks to keep the record open following this hearing, so that all members of the Committee can submit additional written testimony for the record.

[Opening statement of Congressman Dan Coats follows:]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAN COATS, REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF INDIANA, AND RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

Thank you. Mr. Chairman. I am pleased that the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families is conducting a hearing this morning to address the effects of homelessness on children and families. The experience of homelessness is most assuredly traumatizing, no matter how long the duration. Thus, such an experience can produce multiple effects. This we can take as a given. However, I hope we can broaden the scope of our hearing to discuss not only the "effects" of homelessness, but also the causes. Just how do people end up homeless? What are the contributing factors?

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A study by the Office of Policy and Economic Research of the Human Resources Administration in New York, recorded differences between homeless and nonhomeless poor families, which I found of interest. The distinguishable differing traits were: homeless families did not pay much more in rent than nonhomeless AFDC and AFDC-UP families do and homeless families moved an average of three times in six years, compared with 1.3 moves from nonhomeless AFDC families. These findings lead me to believe there is much more involved than just being poor and in need of financial assistance. Just what these variables are that contribute to being homeless I hope will be discussed in today's hearing.

Thank you, again. Mr. Chairman. I am looking forwa.'d to hearing the testimony of the witnesses before us. Also, I would request that the record remain open for at least two weeks following this hearing so that I could submit further written testimony for the record.

FACT SHEET ON HOMELESSNESS: THE IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES, FEBRUARY 24, 1987

General information

Estimated numbers of homeless:

Dept. of Housing & Urban Development	250,000-350,000
National Bureau of Economic Research	350,000
National Coalition for the Homeless	2-3 million
Community for Creative Non-Violence	4 million

There are few disputes that the numbers have grown in recent years. However, little research has been done on homeless families. According to Thomas Main, who wrote "The Homeless Families of New York," in the Fall 1986 issue of Public Interest, "Indeed, even such essential facts as the number and the origin of homeless families are not widely known. The information that has been available is often limited and contradictory." Main further states, "Just what caused the relatively recent explosion of homeless families? No one knows for sure, but there are at least three places we can look in order to get some explanation of just how this happened: the housing market, the nature of the clients themselves, and the city's shelter policy."

Demographic characteristics of homeless families

". . . a significant number are members of families (21 percent). Nationwide, the majority are white, but in some cities, minorities make up the greater share of the homeless population." Gregory Lipton, "Involving The Private Sector in Housing The Homeless," August 1986.

A 1984 study by the New York Human Resources Administration concluded the average homeless family includes 2-3 children and one adult (single, unemployed female) with median ages of six and twenty-seven respectively. Mothers had their children young, with about 36 percent of the families having the first child while the mother was under eighteen. Virtually all the families were on public assistance before they became homeless, with 57 percent having been public assistance recipients for more than five years. Interestingly, 87 percent of the families have close relatives—parents, siblings, cousins, friends and boyfriends—in New York City.

"The homeless are far less educated than the population as a whole, with over half having failed to graduate from high school. The homeless are more prone to substance abuse and mental illness than the population as a whole. A figure that emerges from a wide variety of studies is that approximately one in three homeless persons suffers from mental illness. Less than 2 percent of the U.S. population is mentally ill, which implies that the mentally ill are about 25 times more likely to become homeless than someone else." Richard Freeman, "Permanent Homeless in America?," National Bureau of Economic Research, August 1986.

"The homeless families differ significantly from homeless individuals. They consist of largely of female-headed families. They tend to be predominantly black. Moreover, in contrast to homeless individuals who receive little social welfare benefits, the bulk of homeless families obtain regular AFDC payments and food." Richard Freeman, "Permanent Homeless in America?," National Bureau of Economic Research, August 1986.

"Homeless families seem to have greater behavioral and psychological problems than similar nonhomeless families. And the numbers of such troubled families could be increasing. It may be that such families are less able to adapt to the problems—especially the need to "double-up"—of a tight housing market." Thomas Main, "There is no quick fix," New York Times, Nov. 27, 1986.

There are some differences between homeless and nonhomeless poor families. The Office of Policy and Economic Research at HRA has done a great deal of work to distinguish the differing traits, if any. Their conclusions were: homeless families did not pay much more in rent than nonhomeless AFDC and AFDC-UP families do. Homeless families were more mobile, moving an average of 3 times in six years, against 1.3 times in six years for AFDC families. They had somewhat more crowded quarters, with 14 percent living in single-room occupancies and only 3 percent of nonhomeless AFDC families living in such rooms.

Why are they homeless and where did they come from?

". . . homelessness is a complex phenomenon resulting from a variety of causes." House Report 99-982, Dissenting Views, October 9, 1986, p. 21.

The 1984 New York Human Resources Administration study on homeless showed that an extraordinary 57 percent of those families in the system already had a place to stay—albeit with someone else—before coming to the shelter system. With only 5 percent of homeless families who were pushed out of their former lodgings by physical necessity. "Here we receive the impression that the problem of homelessness for the majority of families is one of holding onto the places they already occupy." Thomas Main, "The Homeless Families of New York," Public Interest, Fall 1986.

"The choice the majority of these families face is not between the streets and the shelter system—a situation that can be proven by the readily observable fact that there are virtually no homeless families on the streets of New York City." Thomas Main, "The Homeless Families of New York," Public Interest, Fall 1986.

"There is no question that the city must provide temporary shelter for victims of burnouts and collapsed buildings. But in the majority of the cases the city is putting up people who already have a place to stay. The function of the system for this majority seems not to be the protection of women and children from the elements, but relief from a tense or uncomfortable situation of doubled-up families." Thomas Main, "The Homeless Families of New York," Public Interest, Fall 1986.

According to "A Comprehensive Plan," issued by New York's HRA, "Until recently the most frequent cause of family displacement was eviction for nonpayment of rent, or a disaster such as a fire or a collapsed building." However, according to Thomas Main, this has also changed. Main states, "Today, more than one-half of all new families requesting assistance have been evicted by the primary tenant in a shared household. . . . Although it is not certain why such a large number of shared households were dislocated in a relatively short period of time, it is clear that the shortages and cost of permanent housing have forced a substantial number of families to enter into cooperative living arrangements.

Impact on children and families

"Slightly more than one-third of the [homeless] mothers (36%) reported they have had a mental illness or 'problem with their nerves' in the past. Nineteen percent reported having been hospitalized for the condition and another 17 percent stated they were treated on an outpatient basis." Michael Phillips, "The Forgotten Ones: Treatment of Single Parent Multi-Problem Families in a Residential Setting, 1978-79.

". . . homeless families lead a highly disorganized and stressful life even before they reach the shelter." Michael Phillips, "The Forgotten Ones: Treatment of Single Parent Multi-Problem Families in a Residential Setting, 1978-79.

A more recent 1981 study, "Homeless Welfare Families: A Search for Solutions: New Research on Multi-Problem Families," commented on Phillips' study, "The important difference between the families selected for this study and low income families are functional not structural. Families headed by single females run a great risk of having lower incomes and living in inadequate—often severely deficient—housing for which they must pay a much larger portion of their income in rent. . . . But for the most part, these families remain stable, adequately solve their problems and successfully meet crises that arise with work, illness, childcare and schooling. The homeless in this study have failures—in reality a prolonged series of failures from which they never fully recover—which indicates an inability to meet their health, economic and housing needs."

". . . homeless families have problems aside from lack of housing. Housing problems do exist, especially in areas such as Boston and New York City. But while a shortage of inexpensive housing does lead to an increase in doubling up, it is the weakest families that are unable to cope with the situation and end up homeless." Thomas Main, "The Homeless Families of New York," Public Interest, Fall 1986.

Chairman **Miller**. Without objection, that will be done.

Do any other members seek recognition at this time? If not, the Committee will call the first panel, that will be made up of Yvette Diaz, who will be accompanied by Valerie Mascitti. Yvette is age 12, and lives in the Hotel Martinique in New York. And Ms. Mascitti is the Director of the Homeless Project for Advocates for Children of New York, from Long Island City, New York. And Lisa and Guy McMullan, who are parents from Dundalk, Maryland, who will be accompanied by their children Jamie, Ryan, Morgan and Ryder McMullan. And Maria Foscarinis, who is Washington Counsel for the National Coalition for the Homeless.

If these people would please come forward at this time.

Welcome to the Committee. We appreciate very much you taking your time to come to talk with the Committee and to give us the benefit of your views and your experiences.

You may have to rotate chairs here a little bit as you testify. But again, let me thank you for your help and your participation with the hearing.

Yvette, welcome to Washington and to the Congress. We want to thank you for taking your time to come down here and to talk with us. And we want you just to relax. I think you have a prepared statement that you want to read to the members of the Committee, and we'll go ahead and do that now, and then I think some members may have some questions for you. But we're going to hear from the other people first.

TESTIMONY OF YVETTE DIAZ, AGE 12, HOTEL MARTINIQUE, NEW YORK

Ms. **Diaz**. My name is Yvette Diaz. I am 12 years old. I live in the Martinique Hotel, 49 West 32nd Street, New York City. I live in rooms 1107 to 1108. There are two rooms. I live here with my mother, two sisters, 9 and 7, and my three-year-old brother. We have lived in the Martinique Hotel for almost two years now. I am living at the Martinique Hotel because my aunt's house burned down, and we didn't have any place to live.

We were living in my aunt's house in Brooklyn because my father was discharged from the United States Air Force in the State of Washington, and the family came back to New York where we originally came from. We couldn't find an apartment right away, so we stayed with my aunt. Then, the house burned down, and we went to the Martinique Hotel.

Since we are living in New York at the Martinique, I have been going to P.S. 64, which is on East 6th Street in Manhattan. When I first started school here, I was absent a lot, because the bus that took us to school in the mornings was late a lot of times, and other times I didn't get up on time. We didn't have an alarm clock. Finally, my mother saved up enough to buy one. This year I have not been absent many times because the bus is on time, and we have an alarm clock.

I don't like the hotel, because there is always a lot of trouble there. Many things happen that make me afraid. I don't go down into the street to play, because there is no place to play on the streets. The streets are dangerous, with all kinds of sick people who are on drugs or crazy. My mother is afraid to let me go downstairs. Only this Saturday, my friend, the security guard at the hotel, Mr. Santiago, was killed on my floor. He was shot by another man and killed. The blood is still on the walls and on the floor. Anyway, people are afraid to open the door to even look out. There are a lot of people on drugs in the hotel. Sometimes you can find needles and other things that drugs come in, all over the hallways.

Our apartment was broken into when we were out. They stole the radio and our telephone alarm clock. We have a TV but they didn't get that, because we hid it in the closet under other things every time we leave the rooms.

We can't cook in the apartment. My mother sneaked a hot plate in, because we don't have enough money to eat out every night. They, the hotel, warned us that if we are caught cooking in the rooms, we could be sent to a shelter.

I play in the hallways with my friends from other rooms on my floor. Sometimes, even that isn't safe. A boy, about 15 or 16, came over to me and wanted to take me up to the 16th floor. I got frightened and ran into my room and told my mother. She went to the Police and she was told this same boy was showing his private parts to girls before, and that it was reported to them. If he bothered me again, I was to tell the Police.

The five of us live in two rooms at this hotel. There is only one bathroom. We don't have mice or rats like some of the other people who live in the hotel, because we have a cat.

I go to the extended day program at my school, P.S. 64. We go from 3:00 to 6:00 every weekday except Friday. I get help with my homework for 45 minutes every day and then we have computer, arts and crafts, dancing, gym and game room. I like it and we also get a hot dinner every night before we go home on the bus. I finish all my homework here as the teacher helps me and it is quiet so I can really understand what I am doing.

If I could have anything that I want, I wish that we had our own apartment in a nice, clean building and a place that I could go outside to play in that is safe. I want that most of all for me and my family.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Yvette Diaz follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF YVETTE DIAZ, NEW YORK

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Since we are in New York at the Martinique Hotel, I have been going to P.S. 64 which is on East 6th Street in Manhattan. When I first started school here, I was absent a lot because the bus that took us to school in the morning was late a lot of the time, and other times I did not get up on time. We did not have an alarm clock. Finally, my mother saved up to buy one. This school year I have not been absent many times because the bus is on time, and we have an alarm clock.

I don't like the Hotel because there is always a lot of trouble there. Many things happen that make me afraid. I don't go down into the street to play because there is no place to play on the streets. The streets are dangerous because there are all kinds of people who are on drugs or crazy. My mother is afraid to let me go downstairs. Only this Saturday my friend the security guard at the Hotel, Mr. Santiago, was killed on my floor. He was shot by another man and killed. Anyway people are afraid to open the door to even look out. There are a lot of people on drugs in the Hotel. I once found needles and other things that drugs come in, in the hallway.

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If I could have anything that I could want I wish that we could have our own apartment in a nice clean building and a place that I could go outside to play in that is safe. I want that most of all for me and my family.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Valerie?

You have to bring the microphone over.

TESTIMONY OF VALERIE MASCITTI, DIRECTOR, HOMELESS PROJECT, ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK, LONG ISLAND CITY, NY

Ms. MASCITTI. Thank you. My name is Valerie Mascitti. I work for Advocates for Children of New York City. Advocates for Children——

Chairman MILLER. Can you bend the microphone down just a little? There you go. Thank you.

Ms. MASCITTI. Advocates for Children is a not-for-profit educational advocacy agency. We have attorneys and lay advocates on staff who assist parents in the five boroughs of New York when they are experiencing problems getting appropriate educational services for their children.

We are facing a devastating national problem. Perhaps it is not yet recognized as a national problem, but if the current bandaid effect that is currently being used by the local, state and federal government continues, it will only be a short time before it is clearly seen as a national problem. Today, the victims are the families, not least of which are the children. Tomorrow, all of us will be the victims.

In December, in New York City, the Human Resources Administration had over 4,000 families, with 11,000 children, living in hotels, shelters and other forms of temporary housing. The numbers grow steadily, and it has been estimated that there are approximately 2,000 more families currently doubled up in apartments with friends and relatives. These families will enter the hotel/shelter system eventually.

In order to help you to better understand, I will start by describing some of the different types of temporary housing being offered in New York City.

There are the Tier 1 shelters, where you have 100 or more strangers in your bedroom every night. There are the Tier 2 shelters, where you have a private room to sleep in with your family, but bathing, toilets and the dining room are shared by 100 or more strangers. Often there are no locks on the doors to your room. That's for security and safety.

Families are sent to hotels. There is the short stay hotel. A family can be sent here for one day to two weeks, never more than 28 days. The permanent stay hotels become just that, one room in a hotel where a family can stay for up to two years or more. Most families have been in each of the above facilities at least once and often they go around and around and around.

The effect on these families, and especially the children, is devastating. As families are shuttled from place to place by HRA, confusion, fear, insecurity, anger, and a deep sense of loss and hopelessness sets in. How can any child be expected to attend school regularly and to learn?

The fact is that some children do not get to school at all, and for others, for other children, school attendance is sporadic. This is due to the constant movement of families by HRA, because of the demands put on the families caught in this system, and many other factors, not limited to the lack of appropriate food or clothing.

Additionally, children become fearful of going to school—afraid that when they return to the hotel or shelter, their family will be gone. Parents, in turn, fear for the safety of their children, afraid of harrassment and physical harm at the hands of other children or teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators and on school buses and by school bus drivers.

Children caught in this system do not get a proper diet. Due to a lack of refrigerators or stoves in hotel rooms and more recently, due to a severe cut in the food stamp allowance, children remain hungry. There have been many studies done that demonstrate the serious negative effects of hunger on the ability of children to concentrate and to retain information.

Congregate shelters are noisy and frightening, and the hotels always have people coming and going. Several of my clients have told me about the fire alarms going off at odd hours every night and the constant noise in the halls. When children can't sleep at night, they fall asleep on their desks at school during the day.

As children fall academically farther and farther behind because of poor attendance, poor nutrition and a lack of sleep, and an inability to concentrate, they often begin to act out in school. This leads to rejection by teachers and peers and often to a referral for an evaluation for placement in a special education class.

These children now have two labels, handicapped and hotel children. Because of a poorer quality curriculum and lower expectations for children in special education, the system is preparing their next generation of homeless, institutionalized families and children.

The facts are that the confusion, fear, insecurity, anger, loss and hopelessness, combined with the actual daily reality of chaos, hunger and rejection by the community they are living in as well as the school community, take their toll.

The children to learn lessons in the hotels and shelters. They learn, often firsthand, about drug abuse, about physical abuse, about alcohol abuse, and prostitution. They learn to accept mental abuse and then how to give back all of those abuses. For these children, there is no light at the end of the tunnel, no way out, no American dream.

As we continue to use astronomical amounts of money that results in nothing more than a bandaid approach, we are all victimized and being lied to. Our children are our future. As we systematically destroy the hopes and dreams of children living in hotels and shelters, we also destroy large pieces of our future.

Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Valerie Mascitti follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VALERIE MASCITTI, ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN, OF NEW YORK, INC., LONG ISLAND CITY, NY

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Dedicated to the protection of every young person's right to an education

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As we continue to use astronomical amounts of money that results in nothing more than a band aid approach we are all victimized and being lied to.

Our children are our future. As we systematically destroy the hopes and dreams of children living in hotels and shelters, we also destroy large pieces of our future.

Chairman **Miller**. Thank you. Maria, I understand you want to introduce the next family? Correct? Bring the microphone over to you, and again, let me welcome you and the McMullans to the Committee. We really appreciate you taking your time to come and to talk with us. Go ahead.

TESTIMONY OF MARIA FOSCARINIS, WASHINGTON COUNSEL, NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS, WASHINGTON, DC

Ms. **Foscarinis**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce the McMullan family, and I would also like to say a few words about homelessness among families in general.

Just briefly, I think it has now become surely obvious that homelessness is a national crisis in America. Perhaps what's a little less obvious is that homelessness is now a crisis affecting families and children. Families with children are now the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population.

Current federal policies both cause and exacerbate this crisis. That's bad. What's even worse is that current efforts to provide even the most minimal emergency aid to homeless families are grossly inadequate. Across the country, the number of shelters that can accommodate intact families with children is sufficient to meet only a fraction of the need.

I think you will hear a firsthand description of that this morning.

The effects of homelessness on families and children are as obvious as they are devastating. But behind the obvious facts and the statistical analysis are real people, real faces and real lives. They can tell their own story. And I would like them to do that this morning, for the Committee.

Mr. Chairman, you and your colleagues on the Committee have the power to effect legislative changes that can ease the plight of these families and alleviate the causes. I hope that their presence here today and their story will move you to take that action.

This is Mrs. Lisa McMullan, who I believe will speak for the McMullan family, and who can introduce the children, whose names I have not managed to remember as yet.

[Prepared statement of Maria Foscarinis follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARIA FOSCARINIS, WASHINGTON COUNSEL TO THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

My name is Maria Foscarinis. I am Washington counsel to the National Coalition for the Homeless, a federation of organizations and individuals around the country. The guiding principles of the National Coalition are simple: in a civilized society, all persons should be afforded the basic resources necessary to survive: decent shelter and adequate food.

Homelessness in America is both a national disgrace and a national crisis. Across the country, growing numbers of men, women and children are struggling to survive without even a bed to sleep in or a meal to eat. Across the nation, this devastation is affecting all segments of the population and all areas of the country.

Nationwide, an estimated 2-3 million persons are homeless. These numbers are growing at alarming rates. According to recent studies by the National Coalition and by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the number of homeless persons rose by 20-25% over the past year alone. About 30% now consist of families: in fact, the fastest growing segment of the homeless population is now families with children.

These facts are grim -- but not surprising. For the past six years, the present Administration has extolled the values of family life. Yet its own policies -- deliberately adopted -- have forced hundreds of thousands of American families out on to the street.

- Since 1981, federal housing programs have been cut over 75%. Waiting lists for these programs -- intended primarily to benefit families -- are now years long. Around the country, poorer families are literally being squeezed out of their homes.
- Since 1981, eligibility requirements for Aid to Families with Dependent Children -- the major benefit program for poor children and families -- have been tightened three times. Around the country, grossly inadequate AFDC payments are forcing parents to make intolerable choices between necessities: paying the rent and putting food on the table.

Current efforts to provide even minimal emergency assistance to homeless families are woefully inadequate. The U.S. Conference of Mayors reports that emergency services -- including shelter -- to families are "particularly lacking". Although families are now 30% of the homeless population, even the federal government reports that only 8% of shelters nationwide can accomodate families. As a result, many homeless families are literally forced to separate merely in order to receive shelter.

Legislative action is desparately needed and long overdue. Two significant pieces of legislation are now pending in Congress. Both should be supported.

. The Urgent Relief for the Homeless Act provides primarily emergency assistance to aid homeless persons -- including homeless families -- this winter. It is an urgent, interim measure -- not a long term -- measure.

. The Homeless Persons Survival Act is a comprehensive bill that contains long-term and preventative measures as well as emergency relief. Provisions of the Survival Act specifically relating to families include the following:

. Expand the EAF program. About half the states now participate in the Emergency Assistance to Families program which provides emergency aid -- including shelter -- to needy families. Participation should be mandatory.

. Modify AFDC "deeming" rules. AFDC rules now encourage the break up of families by taking into account the income of extended family members, including eligibility and benefit levels. Those rules should be modified.

. Permit homeless children to continue their education. Certain local school districts receiving federal funds deny school admission to children without a permanent address. Such districts should be required to modify provisions to permit homeless children to continue their schooling.

. Increase low income housing. Low income housing units must be increased so that homeless families can get off the waiting list and the streets and into affordable housing.

Legislative solutions to homelessness among families exist. Yet as days and years go by without action being taken, homelessnes threatens to become a crisis handed down between generations. It is imperitive that Congress act with urgency to provide both emergency and long term relief.

TESTIMONY OF LISA AND GUY McMULLAN, PARENTS, DUNDALK, MD, ACCOMPANIED BY JAMIE, RYAN, MORGAN, AND RYDER McMULLAN

Mrs. McMULLAN. This is Ryder, our youngest. This is my oldest, Jamie, my oldest boy, Ryan, my husband, Mac, and our youngest daughter down there is Morgan.

Chairman MILLER. Welcome. Good morning.

Mrs. McMULLAN. Thank you. Hopefully, he'll survive the death grip I have on him from nerves.

Chairman MILLER. He's fine. Don't you worry about him at all. If you want to let him down and run around, no problem at all. Whatever is easiest for you.

Mrs. McMULLAN. We're from Montana. And when we were back there, my husband was working for the city, and was laid off. His job was phased out due to the farm crisis, which we were not in the farming, but it affected the entire town.

We had to give our house back to the bank, and I opened up the doors and had a garage sale. I mean, I sold everything—toys, shoes, clothes, you name it, we sold it. I had a lady give me a quarter for our dog dish. One lady even volunteered to take the cat.

And then we came out here and my husband found work. Well, when we first got out here, there were seven of us, and we lost our youngest to SIDS. So we not only had a financial setback, we had an emotional setback. We finally got on our feet a little bit, got our own place. My husband was laid off work. Next thing I know we're receiving all these eviction notices, and my husband is ripping his hair out thinking he can't take care of us.

We finally moved out, and we moved in, we went down to the Social Services and said we no longer have a home, we need help, we need a shelter, we need someplace to go.

The biggest thing I found was that nobody takes whole families. We—much less one that is our size. They said well, one place would take just the children, one place would take myself and two of the children. And most of them were all full. And I think there was one shelter that would take my husband. And the social worker looked at me, and she says well, I think I may be able to find a place for you and the children, but what is your husband going to do? And I looked at this lady and I said, lady, we have been through everything together. I am one of the more fortunate families, that my husband has not walked out. He has stayed with the family through thick and thin. And I said, and I am not going to throw him out to a car now. I said you're going to have to do something better.

So they called the Salvation Army. And the Salvation Army was able to take us all in. Now, we were all in one bedroom, the six of us. And it was—it was hard, because we tried to keep up a routine, from taking my husband to work, taking my other two to school. My husband had found himself another job. We, like they said, there's a lot of strange people there. You have to watch your children constantly. There is no emotional break. The children are not allowed to watch TV, unless we were there. We have meals at such and such a time, which we missed two of them by my taking my husband and my children to school. We had a very nice, strange man, who liked to look through the shower doors and watch the girls taking a shower, which I caught him looking at my daughter.

The people that come in there, you're so stressed out, you're angry, you're frustrated, and you're walking around, just a bundle of nerves. And it makes it even harder. And you've got emotionally handicapped people in there. You've got a time limit on how long you can stay. There are roaches, the kind that walk.

We ran into trying, trying to stabilize some kind of a routine, which is really hard, because kids need that, they need a stable environment they need to know who is in control of my life, because I'm a child, I'm not supposed to be in control yet.

And that was extremely hard to do. The snows came and everybody was even more cooped up inside. And like we would go and take walks and try and find a little, little escape hatch, something so that we could maintain our sanity. I mean, I found myself doing things I normally don't do. I usually don't run around screaming at people I don't know for no reason. Usually, you can have a bad day at work, and you go home and your wife or your husband will give you a big hug, cup of coffee, sit down and relax, and it gets all better. But we were finding that hugging each other was not helping any longer, it was not helping to relieve that tension, that anxiety that kept building and building and building. And you start screaming at the kids and the kids are fighting. You can't let them play with the other kids. And you're just, you're becoming almost crazy in these places trying to get out.

Now, through all this, I was still trying to go to school through the Fire Department. So, two nights a week, I was still leaving, going to school, and my husband had the honor of taking care of the four children without me. We ran into—fortunately, we never ran into problems in the school yet. And they have transferred schools three times since the school year started. We—I went in one day and just screaming at the Director of the Salvation Army, and her assistant, for like a half an hour, just like a crazy person. And then she asked me, she says, do you feel better now? And I did. You know. But I mean, I was taking it out on the one person that was there to help me. And everybody walks around like that. Because you've got to watch all your stuff, because people are rifling through your rooms. You're getting robbed, you know. You've got people that if you bump, they're screaming that you're trying to kill them. You can't leave your kids alone for minute, to just go ah, give me a break. You can't go outside. And it's really, really stressful, and it's hard on the entire family. The kids are fighting more, they're bickering, there's no place to do their homework.

We put our kids to bed at 8:00 o'clock, boom, that's it, you're in bed, homework's done, showers are taken care of. And it's hard when you've got another, I think we had another 12 people in our little cubbyhole there on the floor, that were up running around until 11:00.

And we found even finding housing, when we were finally starting to save up a little money to get back out again, was next to impossible. No one rents to you when you have four children. They do not rent three bedroom houses to you or three bedroom apartments. They look at you and they say well, we can rent you a four or five-bedroom, but I'm sorry, you do not make enough income to rent a four or five bedroom. So you're back to Square One.

We ran into a lot, a lot of emotional strains. There was obviously no privacy for my husband and I that we could have just a little time of just hugging each other, trying to relieve some of this tension. And my biggest relief I guess was I volunteer at one of the Fire Departments and I think I, I was only supposed to go and stay a few hours. I think I stayed two nights, just because I couldn't handle coming back yet to the Salvation Army.

And it was my release to go and help other people, riding the ambulance.

I don't have my notes.

We need more adequate housing, something where you don't have to cram quite so many people on a floor and they can be more separated to where you're having, where families are allowed to stay together. I mean, there was a number of times my husband said to me, I think maybe you guys would be better off without me. Maybe I should leave and you can go on Welfare and Social Services and I'm going, don't do that, don't do that, we've been through too much. We've been through too much to give up now.

We found that we are a support system between each other, and we support each other. And that's what a lot of the other people did not have. They did not have any counseling or any support. My kids were going to counseling at the time because of the death of the baby, and going through the grieving process, to help them.

The stress has not quite eased up, because we no more moved into our apartment than my husband was handed another layoff notice. I am not working yet either. I just finished, I just graduated on Valentine's Day, so hopefully I will find a job rapidly, and I'm hoping my husband will be hired back or he will be able to find another job. But the housing is very, very inadequate. And there's a lot of people out there.

And there are families that are trying to stay together. But it's hard to stay together as a family unit, extremely hard. And I would like to see housing set up for the families, where husbands can stay with their wives and their children, and they can accommodate large families. Because I know there are a few of us out there still, and not just single women with one or two children. And that's what we were running up against.

And I'm hoping that seeing us and understanding where we've been and what we've been through, and it's not like, you know, we woke up one morning and said gee, I think we ought to go out and be homeless, let's try something new today. It's just not that way. We've always worked. And you know, the farm prices and that, we had nothing to do with that. And when he gets his layoff slips because the company's going under or for whatever reason they do layoffs, you know, we're not part of that. I mean, we were, we were working, but not part of why we were being laid off.

And there are people out there who are trying to get an education, trying to better ourselves, trying to get on with our lives, and trying to be a productive part of this society.

I don't think the government owes me a home, here, you are to give me a home, you are to feed my family, you are to do all this. But we're at the point where we need help, a helping hand, that's all. Because once you hit the homeless, people look at you like you don't even register as a human being any longer.

If you're on Welfare, you're at least on the bottom of the scale. You tell people that you're living in a shelter, and they do not hire you. They do not hire people who are living in the shelter. For whatever reason, but it's like you no longer exist as a human being. And it's not fair. It's not fair to us who are trying so hard and it's not fair to our children. Because I've got two that are extremely ambitious. And they are still holding a straight B average in school, even though they've transferred school three times. And it's hard to see your kids going through these kind of things, and it's not what you want.

Everybody wants something better for their kids. I want a better life than I had. And I think everybody does. And we're not any different. And that's what we're trying harder for, is to get back to having a normal family household where it's just Mom and Dad telling you what to do, not directors of the shelters and not other parents and all the craziness that goes along, because there is so much confusion, it's hard for the children to say what is it I'm supposed to be doing now? Because these people are saying one thing, these people are saying something else, these people are running this place and Mom and Dad are saying something completely different. And so they end up not doing anything out of their frustration.

I know there are people that are less fortunate than we are. And I'm hoping that you will be able to help all of us.

Chairman **MILLER**. Thank you.

Mrs. **MCMULLAN**. Thank you.

Chairman **MILLER**. Guy, did you have anything you wanted to say?

Mr. **MCMULLAN**. No.

Chairman **MILLER**. Okay. We may have some questions later.

Mr. **MCMULLAN**. Okay.

[Prepared statement of Lisa McMullan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MRS. LISA MCMULLAN, DUNDALK, MD

My name is Lisa McMullan. I am here with my husband, Guy, and my four children, Jamie, Ryan, Morgan and Ryder. The story of my family's experience with homelessness began in Mile City, Montana, early in 1986. My husband and I owned a house there, but when my husband's job was phased out due to the farm crisis, we could no longer make the mortgage payments so we gave the house back to the bank, sold everything and came East in the Spring.

We first stayed with my mother-in-law, but that didn't work out because there wasn't enough room for all of us. There were seven of us living in the basement. After a few months we moved to Baltimore, and my husband and I both held a number of jobs. In November or December, 1986, we began to have problems paying the rent on our apartment. [Lack of construction work; day care too expensive.] After several eviction notices, we found ourselves without a place to live and with no place to go. I called around, with the help of Social Services, to several shelters in Baltimore, but no one would take us as a whole family. Finally, the Salvation Army offered us a room to stay in. The room was very small with six people in it. The conditions at the shelter were very stressful for me and my family and the children particularly became much more difficult to manage. The food was not that good as you can probably imagine. It was very crowded, and there's a weird feeling that goes along with being there. You feel like you're nothing because you suddenly don't have a home. You know you've done all you can do and it isn't your fault, but the whole situation makes you feel like you must have done something wrong.

My family and I tried very hard to overcome these feelings. Especially because it really hurts the children. Children need to know and feel who has control over their lives. And suddenly they are living in a situation where they see their parents need outside help, and they are all suddenly living with many other people they don't know and who frighten them. To combat all this, and to keep our family life in order, we tried very hard to maintain a schedule. We made sure we went on walks with the children, we kept then in school, and did all we could do to make them feel we still had control over our lives and were still there for them.

But this was a real struggle for us. We were up every morning at 6:00 a.m. to get my husband to work on time and to take the two older children to school. In doing this, we missed breakfast at the shelter every day until they began giving us boxes of cereal to bring along to eat later. We were fortunate in still having a car to be able to keep that schedule. Not everbody does.

We were at the shelter between three and four weeks. Many of our experiences there were frightening and added a lot to the stress in our family. There was no door on the woman's shower and one night I caught a man peeking into the women's bathroom watching my ten-year-old daughter. The man also lived in the shelter and I reported him, but nothing was done about it. Another time, a woman accused my daughter of trying to push her down the stairs. As it turned out, we learned that the woman was mentally disturbed and hated to be touched, so if you got too close to her, she got very upset.

These were the kind of things—overcrowding, hunger, lack of privacy and insecurity about the future—that really put stress on our children and our family. It was very hard on us all. My two oldest children, ten and seven years old, were in counseling originally to help then deal with the loss of their younger sister to crib death when we were at my mother-in-law's house. But then I kept them in counseling all throughout this period because I knew that not having the security of a home and living in a shelter would be hard on them.

We recently found a small apartment, but it turns out that our crisis was not over yet. A week after we moved in, my husband was laid off from his job at Bethlehem Steel. We are now both looking for jobs and are trying to get stability back in our children's lives. It is very, very difficult to maintain a family in this kind of insecure environment. I know that if it weren't for each other, we probably couldn't keep struggling to improve things.

Unfortunately, I know what great damage and harm that homelessness can do to a family, even when they're all trying to do their best to make everything work. Because of my family's painful experiences, I wanted to tell you our story today. We appreciate your concern and thank you for the opportunity you have provided by holding this hearing. I know that our story will help you to help others like us and especially those who have been even less fortunate.

Chairman **MILLER**. Next we'll hear from June Bucy, who is the Executive Director for the National Network for Runaway and Youth Services from Washington, D.C.

TESTIMONY OF JUNE BUCY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF RUNAWAY AND YOUTH SERVICES, INC.

Ms. **BUCY**. On any cold and dreary day, in any major city of America, there are hundreds of youth who have taken up permanent residency on our streets. They eat out of dumpsters, sleep in abandoned buildings, sell their bodies to stay alive, and they do it every day.

They have long histories with social and judicial agencies. Most are described as unamenable to treatment and resistant to any type of intervention. That's what it says in their case records. They are angry, hostile, manipulative, and unpleasant. They are also frightened, lonely, and vulnerable.

I am June Bucy, and I am the Executive Director of The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services. I would like to be a voice for those homeless young people today.

I would like to thank the Chairman and Mr. Coats and members of this Committee for your holding this hearing and providing the opportunity to report to you what our members across the country have told us.

Members of the Network are agencies that serve high-risk youth. We see ourselves as advocates as well as service providers, change agents as well as community-based programs.

I call your attention to homeless youth. Young people between the ages of 13 and 21, who belong nowhere.

Ironically, as the number of throwaway children increases, so does our need for an educated, entry-level work force. The baby bust means that the number of young people in the work force will shrink by two fifths between now and the year 2000. We can ill afford to lose the potential of such children.

There's really a dearth of data about homeless youth, partially because researchers seem unaware that there are teenagers separate from their families, who don't have mothers fighting for them, getting them to school. These children are all alone, and they are a significant proportion of the homeless population.

Most shelters for homeless families—and we have heard today they are not altogether pleasant places to be—simply will not accept older children. Particularly boys are considered too disruptive and too frightening to other people in the shelter, and they cannot go in.

Adult shelters for either men or women are often not allowed to assist minors. Most young people who are homeless and alone must resort to illegal ways of securing food and shelter. Drugs, prostitution, and an increasing amount of thefts, so they have told me this week, allow those young people to exist on our streets.

A distinction needs to be made between runaway and homeless youth. It is important to note that homeless youth are not disrespectful teenagers who have run off to the circus. Actually, neither are runaways. Up to 70 percent of the children who come into our federally-funded shelters have come from abusive homes. But they do have families to whom they may return. And 80 percent of those children can return home, when their families have agreed to work with the professional counselors.

Homeless children, on the other hand, who come to the shelters are those children who have no family to which they may return. All that we know about homeless and runaway children teaches us that the prevention of family chaos and stress and early intervention with the young people, are our best defense against the perils of the street.

I have examined many reports and talked with people from several communities in preparing this testimony. There is no agreed-upon definition for homeless youth, because the notion of young people being completely on their own and the age at which one is considered a young person as opposed to a child or as opposed to an adult has simply not been decided. And the data from one city is not comparable to the data from another.

However, there does seem to be an agreement on these things: The number of homeless youth living alone is exploding. Rural youth are a growing number among the homeless. And young people up to 21 should be included in the service population, as we work with these kids, since their needs are so similar to the 16 to

18 year olds' needs, basically learning the skills to care for themselves, and completing their education.

I think the most important thing, and something that folks never seem to grasp, is a large majority, up to 90 percent of the kids living on the street, are as much a victim of our public helping systems as they are of their own or their families' behavior.

Every study indicates that homeless youth were most often first removed from their families by authorities who deemed those families abusive or neglectful. The children were set upon a carousel of repeated placements, averaging four a year, and eventually have been ejected, emancipated, or simply lost in the records by that helping system.

As one young person said: "I don't want your help, it hurts too much."

Lack of an education may be the most costly effect of homelessness on youth. One study showed that 23.7 percent of the families, young people coming into the shelters, had moved four or more times in the past 12 months. It's difficult even for children of the age of the family we've just visited with, to go to school, when they have a mother to drive them there and to encourage them in their grades and be proud of them. It's terribly difficult for a teenager to be motivated enough to enter four schools every year.

Most young people are excluded from school if the family does not have a permanent address. And almost all are excluded if they don't even live with their families. The young people tend, when they have gotten into the homeless situation, to be behind grade level already and have problems with school. Interestingly enough, they tend to see themselves as people who can learn. 69 percent of the young people in shelters express the wish to finish high school and 41 express the wish to graduate from college. As unrealistic as this may seem to us, it tells us something about those kids.

Health problems include poor nutrition (youngsters really don't balance their diet), alcohol and drug abuse, and sexually-transmitted disease. A particular serious, and most often unnoted problem is an extremely high percentage of AIDS infection among street youth. Three people that I have talked to this week have told me that the "Johns" and the "chicken hawks" are seeking younger and younger children to prostitute, in hope that the little ones will not yet be diseased.

Is there no hope? For people who have had no experience with these young people, it is an utterly dumbfounding situation. For those of us who know the names of these children, and have worked with them, and love them, the mystery is why we continue to allow these things to happen. Prevention is our first line of defense. And we know a great deal about preventing family devastation, family chaos and abuse of children.

A great deal is known about programs that can help these young people, and there are some pilot programs that have operated across the country long enough to have had good evaluations. And we know what helps. The most important element seems to be that young people develop trust in someone who meets them where they are, and does not confront them with judgmental and rejecting opinions about their lifestyle. Certainly not someone who agrees that their lifestyle is a productive one, but at least can see that they are human and that they do care.

In my written testimony, which I have submitted for the record, I have described a good deal about programs that will help these young people. I'd like to stress that there should not be early and arbitrary age cutoffs. Older youth straddle several legal turning points. Different ages for school attendance, driving, drinking, signing leases, receiving public aid or being considered by the courts as adults. It's very confusing to a young person, and particularly if their development has been sabotaged by child abuse or other violence. They need a time to stop and grow up. And we would urge you to let that time be long enough that the job can be done.

There is hope. Street kids have a zest for life and a basic drive to make the most out of whatever situation they encounter. When we reconnect these young people to the worlds of school and work, they can become productive and achieving members of our community. Programs for these youth are not a dead end. They are a challenge worthy of our best efforts.

However complex the cultural lag from our increasing technology, however tragic our divorce rates, however overwhelming our national deficit, we cannot afford to systemically by our national policy force children to bear the brunt of these larger societal problems. The resources of our Nation are surely sufficient that we do not need to triage our youth and throw away those victims of violence who need us the most. We do not lack the knowhow or the money to care for these young people. We simply lack the will to get on with the task.

Chairman **MILLER**. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of June Bucy follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JUNE BUCY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF RUNAWAY AND YOUTH SERVICES, WASHINGTON, DC

On any cold and dreary day, on every bright and sunny day, in any major city of America there are hundreds of youth who have taken up permanent residency on our streets. They eat out of dumpsters, sleep in abandoned buildings, sell their bodies to stay alive, and they do it every day. They have long histories with social and judicial agencies. Most are described as unamenable to treatment and resistant to any type of intervention. They are angry, hostile, manipulative, and unpleasant. They are also frightened, lonely, and vulnerable. At one time they were hopeful and looking forward to life just as do more fortunate children in our wonderful and freedom loving society. Now, most of the hope is gone. Street youth are a lost population . . . grow hard in a hostle environment. They expect only years of survival rather than satisfying or successful lives. One is reminded of Thomas Hobbes' statement, "It is a war of each against all, in which life is nasty, brutish, and short.

We have yet to find the way or the will to offer a positive alternative.

I am, June Bucy, Executive Director of the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services, and I would like to be a voice for those youth today. I wish to thank the Chairman and members of the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families for this opportunity to report to you what our members have told us.

The National Network of Runaway and Youth Services is a membership organization whose purpose is to develop our nation's capacity to increse, insure, and promote the personal, social, economic, educational, and legal options, and resources available to runaway and homeless youth and other at-risk youth, their families and their communities. Our 1,000 affiliate agencies are in every state and provide services of shelter, counseling, education, job readiness training, etc. to high risk youth. They also provide linkages to health, legal and other social services, where they exist for this population.

We see ourselves as advocates as well as service providers, change agents as well as community based programs. For many of us the pressing needs of youth, and the very survival of our democratic society which persists in throwing away its young, have become passionate committments. It is in this spirit that I call your attention to homeless youth---the hundreds of thousands of young people between the ages of 13 and 21 who belong nowhere, and to no one.

Ironically enough as our population of throw-a-way children increases so does our need for an educated entry-level workforce. The baby bust means that the number of young people in the workforce will shrink by two-fifths between now and the year 2000. By 1990, an estimated three out of four jobs will require some education or technical training beyond high school. Even now all but about 6% of jobs require a high school diploma. We presently have about a 28% school drop out rate---and it is climbing. In some of our cities the dropout rate is at 50%. Even if we did not value children for their inherent worth, which I am sure you do or you would not be serving on this Select Committee, we must realize that we cannot continue to throw away our most precious resource.

Who are these youth? How did they become disconnected from their families, schools, health care, work, and from society itself? Why did they turn to the streets for a home? How many are there, and what should be done about them?

The answers are limited. There is a dearth of data about this population. Almost no studies of the homeless population have gathered figures about this group because they tend to be clustered in other places than those frequented by adults and families; and because most researchers seem unaware that teenagers separate from their families are a significant proportion of the homeless population.

Many teenagers become homeless when their families are turned into the streets. Of these youth there is almost no accounting. Most shelters for homeless families will not accept older teens, especially boys, because they are disruptive and seem a threat to other residents. Families are divided for days, months, or forever. Adult shelters are most often not allowed to assist minors. So unless the youth lie about their age they cannot go to the shelters for homeless adults. Most yount people who are homeless and alone must resort to illegal ways of securing food and shelter. Dealing drugs, prostitution, and an increasing amount of theft (or so I was told while researching for this presentation) allow them to exist.

Some of the youth on our streets are unaccompanied minors of an immigrant population. Many of these have no legal standing and try to remain outside the range of any government notice. They are prime targets for recruitment into gangs.

An increasing number of youth seeking emergency services report that they left home to escape from physical or sexual abuse, extreme neglect or parental dessertion. "Throwaway" youth are discarded by their families whose economic, health, or emotional resources are so limited, that they cannot cope with their adolescents. Homeless youth are NOT disrespectful teenagers who have "runaway to the circus" for adventure.

The United States Department of Health and Human Resources reports that in FY 85 thirty five percent of the young people presenting to the federally funded runaway centers claim to be homeless. These programs have learned a great deal about how to work with troubled families, and despite the young person's feeling that they cannot return home some of these do go home after skilled professionals or volunteers have worked with the family. 80% of all the runaways whose families are willing to work with the centers to resolve their problems are able to return home, 13% were placed in other stable living situations. Only 7% return to the streets. Runaway programs have been very cost effective, successful programs in meeting the goals of the Congress.

Homeless and runaway children have been a difficult phenomenon for Americans to understand. There is a prevailing ideology that family life is a private matter, and that family members are not accountable to anyone outside the home for their treatment of each other or for the distribution of the resources of the family. It is assumed that all members of the nuclear, if not the extended, family will be allowed to live in the family home and share in the food, clothes, medical care, and other necessities that families generally provide. Families are also supposed to be "happy." Certainly children are to be obedient and parents are to be honored for their loving and self-sacrificial care.

Our "certainty" that this is the way families function has blinded us to the circumstances in families who fail to meet these norms. The result of these unexamined assumptions is that society tends to consider families and individual family members who do not fit this stereotype as personally defective people, or at least personally "to blame" for their disturbing and chaotic behavior. The lack of a broad perspective on the causes for family disruption, and the tendency to blame the adolescent for his deviant behavior has resulted in the traditional systems for child protection, law enforcement, education, and medical and legal services ignoring the plight of the homeless youth. The labels we put on these youth are a part of blaming the victim as though children choose to be homeless.

I have examined reports from several communities that have attempted to provide services for homeless youth. There is no agreed upon definition. HHS has estimated there are 500,000 youth who are homeless at some time during each year. Estimates of 10,000 homeless youth in Chicago, 20,000 in New York, 3,500 in Boston, and 350 in Portland, OR are not necessarily comparative counts because the methods of estimating these numbers and the definitions differ widely.

There does seem to be agreement on these things:

- The number of homeless youth is exploding.
- Rural youth are a growing number among the homeless.
- The shortage of low rent housing makes it very difficult for young people to set up their own household.
- Part time work at a minimum wage does not produce enough money to provide the basic necessities for independent living.
- Single mothers, particularly teen aged ones have severe difficulties earning enough to support their families.
- Young people up to 21 should be included in the "service population" since their needs are so similar to those of the 16-18 year olds.
- A large majority (up to 90%) are as much victims of our public helping systems as they are of their own or their families' behavior.

Every study indicates that homeless youth were most often removed from families deemed abusive or neglectful by authorities, set upon a carousel of repeated "placements", and are eventually ejected, emancipated, or lost in the records by that helping system.

As one youth said, "I don't want your help, it hurts too much."

We badly need more data on these youth so that planning, funding, and evaluating programs to meet their needs can be based in reality. I would caution, however, that as much as we need definitions and data, we need even more to have programs that can operate in an inclusive fashion. It would be tragic if the attempts to define and document needs for this population become another complex set of "criteria" that becomes so hardened in case books that the real live children continue to be excluded because they cannot be "certified."

In regard to the health and education issues of these homeless youth there are some interesting findings from recent studies that point to the needs of this population.

In 1984 a study by the New York Psychiatric Institute of youth coming into all the youth shelters in New York City for a two week period revealed that 33% of the girls and 15% of the boys had attempted suicide before they came to the shelter. Another 33% of the girls had "thought about suicide and about how they would commit it". Fifty percent of the girls and 33% of the boys desired help for depression. (So much for the off to the circus mentality.)

Seventy percent of the youth had used drugs. Forty four percent of the girls and 71% of the boys had been at one time suspended or expelled from school and few of them were attending school when they came to the shelter. They do not, however, consider themselves to be unequal to the tasks of school: 69% said they would like to finish high school, and 41% expressed the wish to graduate from college.

School attendance is affected by the family stability. It is difficult for a child to enter several schools each year. It is almost impossible for him to register for school if he does not have a permanent address. A measure of the chaotic home life of these New York youth presenting to shelters is that only about 25% had had no change in living arrangements during the past 12 months. Forty-one percent experienced from one to three changes, while nearly a quarter of the sample (23.7%) had four or more changes. Those with a past history of foster care placement (50%) had significantly more changes in living arrangements than youth without experience in the foster care system (a mean of 4.06 changes in contrast to a mean of 1.88.)

All studies of street youth that look at educational attainment find the youth to be below grade level for their age, discouraged by the system, and probably cut off from achievement in traditional school programs. In our highly technical society this lack of basic skills may be the most serious of all the problems facing homeless youth. It takes so long to catch up that most will never have the opportunity or motivation to make the effort, and will, therefore, be severely handicapped in earning a living wage.

Health problems include poor nutrition, alcohol and drug abuse (87% and 84% in a study done in Toronto), and sexually transmitted disease (96% in the Toronto study.)

Almost all youth living on the streets are sexually active, and many of them survive by accepting money from adults who prostitute them. A particularly serious, and most often un-noted problem is the extremely high percentage of AIDS infection among street youth. Three programs reported to me that the johns and chicken hawks are seeking younger and younger children to prostitute in hopes that these little ones will not yet be diseased.

Is there no hope?

For people who have no experience with these young people it is an utterly dumbfounding situation. For those of us who "know the names of these children" and have worked with them, the mystery is why we continue to allow these things to happen. For all of us it is a challenge that must be faced.

There is hope. There are programs that have had thorough evaluations which proved them to be effective in keeping youth off the streets, and in helping them turn from the streets. Several of these programs have been in operation for a long enough period of time that a great deal is known about the elements of good programming, the cost, and cost effectiveness of these outreach efforts, and a variety of ways to integrate these programs into community service delivery systems.

One study states the following about the youth who after working in the program were able to get off the streets:

1. They were older at age of first street involvement.
2. They had been on the street a shorter period of time.
3. They had lived with both parents.
4. They had lived with families a longer period of time.
5. They were less severely abused or neglected.

Program findings "make it very clear that youth seriously and genuinely attempt to leave the streets. The youth tracked in the STEP research attempted an average of 2 exits during the research period. In one 6 month period, 22 youth exited and 19 returned to the streets, only to try again. Failure tneds to increase commitment to street life and to intensify feelings of low self-esteerm making youth more vulnerable to victimization and disillusionment. Youth who do not exit will continue street behavior and enter an adult criminal network or continue dependence on public resources in adult life."

Young people turning away from the streets must develop trust in someone who meets them where they are and does not confront them with judgmental and rejecting opinions about their life style. When healing from the violence and abuse has begun to take place, programs need to provide training in personal health care---giving attention to building self esteem, good hygiene, and elimination of substance abuse. Young people must learn how to secure and maintain a place to live, food, clothing, and household goods. Money management skills such as budgeting, banking, saving, computing wages and taxes, and exercising consumer discretion must be learned.

There must be an opportunity to go back to school or trade school, get a GED or enter some program to insure basic reading, math, and computation skills. Work readiness programs can help youth find job openings, dress neatly, apply for the job, and manifest appropriate work attitudes and behavior on the job. They need to know how to access and to use public transportation, clinics, legal services, employment agencies and other community resources. Young people with no family must learn to build their own support system of intimates, friends, and helpers; they need to be able to be good marriage partners and parents if the cycle of tragedy is to be broken.

Programs that provide these opportunities must not have early and arbritrary age cutoffs. The older youth straddle several legal turning points--different ages for school attendance, driving, drinking, signing leases, receiving Public Aid and having their offenses considered those of an adult by the criminal courts. They need a chance to mature at their own rate and make up for the developmental sabotage that is the result of early violence and abuse.

Provision must also be made for pregnant teens, teen mothers and fathers, and their children. The special needs of gay and lesbian youth must be met. Programs should be sensitive to ethnic and cultural issues since a very large proportion of street youth are of ethnic minorities.

Programs need to meet health standards, have safety equipment, and adequate staff coverage, but creative programming must avoid counterproductive licensing requirements such as specific closet or drawer space in residences, and overly long processes for licensing private host homes. We do not need government at its worst--promulgating regulations for non-existent facilities.

Yes, there is hope.

Street kids often have a zest for life and a basic drive to make the most out of whatever situation they encounter. When we re-connect these young people to the worlds of school and work, they can become productive and achieving members of the community. Programs for these youth are not a dead end--it is a challenge worthy of our best efforts.

However complex the cultural lag from our increasing technology, however tragic our divorce rates, however overwhelming our national deficit, we cannot afford to systemically force children to bear the brunt of these larger societal problems. The resources of our nation are surely sufficient that we do not need to triage our youth and throw away those victims of violence who need us the most. We do not lack the know how or the money to care for these young people--we only lack the will to get on with the task.

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Chairman **Miller**. Ms. McChesney, before I call on you, I think what I'd like to do is give members of the Committee an opportunity to ask questions of the McMullans and Yvette so that we don't add to the tensions here. These kids have been wonderful to sit at this table. The best-behaved witnesses we've had in months. So I'd like to open it up for questioning. And if I might begin, this is to both Lisa and Guy.

Your testimony strongly suggests to this Committee, and seems to be supported a little bit by the other testimony, that we're really talking about a system that once you engage it, almost encourages the breakup of the family. You're constantly beset with the notion that one, you can either get some help from the system or things could be better within this system of help for the homeless if you would simply give up some or all of your children, or if you and your husband would split up, or Guy, if you wouldn't, if you'd just say you didn't want to have shelter with them and go live on the street, they could have shelter.

I don't think most people are aware that this is the nature of the system, these are the decisions that are being forced upon what I would say certainly start out as rather healthy families in crummy circumstances, and can very quickly end up to be very unhealthy families in crummy circumstances.

I just wondered how many times, and I don't mean an exact accounting, but just how many times were you confronted with this notion that if you would turn over your children for foster care or some other care away from you, or Guy, if you would opt out of the picture here, that somebody could assist you?

How common is that? I don't want to make more of it than it is. But it's a little frightening.

Mr. **McMullan**. You run into more of that than you do the circumstance where people say yes, we'll help everybody.

Chairman **Miller**. You receive more offers of conditional help based upon some change in the structure of your family?

Mr. **McMullan**. Right.

Mrs. **McMullan**. Right.

Mr. **McMullan**. You've got to give up everything you own. Like say if you have a car, or you have a small amount of money saved.

Chairman **Miller**. You're just not poor enough for the system?

Mr. **McMullan**. Right. You have to have—like we couldn't get any more help on the eviction problem in Baltimore until we were out on the street, you know.

Mrs. **McMullan**. Yes. I'd asked them to help.

Mr. **McMullan**. And when you approach those people in those jobs as a responsible individual who happens to be having a hard time, you know, you're subject to ridicule. They don't expect you to be there. They think you're hustling them or something. They want you to be destitute. The Welfare program, the best thing is for me to be out of the house, my wife not to work, and you can see the scope of the problems that are there when you have that situation. Salvation Army was the only one out of a list of services that would take the father and children and the family all together. And my wife approached a lot of different people, organizations. And they all said the same thing, that you have to have—they will take a mother and her children, but not the husband.

Mrs. **McMullan**. We had, when my husband had been laid off one job and then was hired on another one, he took a tremendous cut in pay, so we could no longer afford the apartment that we were in. I went to Social Services, when we started being handed all these lovely eviction notices, and I said, can you help us, because we're going to lose our deposit, get us into a cheaper place to live, something within our means that we can afford.

And they said no, we cannot help you until you are on the street. I said, why wait that long? I said there's a lot of us out here. Why wait until we're actually sitting on the street corner? And then all they did was call a shelter. I was already doing that.

Mr. **McMullan**. It cost us our little bit of money that we had saved to go with their program, the way they wanted to operate it, it cost us more, unnecessary, you know.

Chairman **Miller**. Yvette, do you know if this is true, in your hotel, have families had to give up some of their children to foster care or separate from their fathers or their mothers so they could live there?

Ms. **Diaz**. I don't really know. I don't speak to hardly anybody in the hotel.

Chairman **Miller**. Ms. Mascitti, is this common?

Ms. **Mascitti**. I've heard many reports. And because we're an educational advocacy agency, generally parents come to us when their trying to get their kids into school or solve a problem. But I have heard many, from other agencies, many reports of special services for children walking in and saying you know, look at how you're living, we have to take your kids.

Mrs. **McMullan**. Excuse me, Mr. Miller?

Chairman **Miller**. Yes.

Mrs. **McMullan**. That was one of the things we feared more than anything else, that if our time ran out in the shelter and we didn't have it all together and another place lined up, that they would come in and say you're not taking very good care of your family and we're going to take your children. I mean, I have seen my husband literally get sick and lose his dinner worrying about Social Services stepping in and taking our children from us.

Chairman **Miller**. They would make the judgment for these reasons, that you're an unfit family, and therefore they now have the right to start removing children from the home. Mr. Coats.

Mr. **Coats**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. and Mrs. McMullan, I want to commend you for making a valiant effort to keep your family together, through obviously some very, very trying circumstances. You are an exception to the rule. I hope you can hang in there. The strength in your family, as I see it sitting here, is in your unity in pulling through this together. And I just trust that things will improve for you and that you'll be able to keep things together.

What is your current situation now?

Mrs. **McMullan**. I am presently unemployed, looking for work, and my husband is collecting unemployment.

Mr. **McMullan**. I haven't got it yet. I just got laid off at Bethlehem Shipyards, Sparrows Point. And that was due to weather and material cutbacks, material that wasn't on hand. And I just talked to the supervisor yesterday and he said two to three weeks.

Mr. COATS. Are you presently receiving other benefits? AFDC?

Mr. McMULLAN. WIC.

Mrs. McMULLAN. WIC.

Mr. COATS. WIC? How about food stamps? School lunch subsidies?

[No response.]

Mr. COATS. Are you in the process of applying for these other benefits? Am I missing something?

Mr. McMULLAN. We've considered going down and getting food stamps. It's an all day affair and we just haven't gone and done it yet.

Mrs. McMULLAN. One of the things is that we are trying not to get caught up in the welfare system, because it seems like from what we've talked, it's kind of like once you get in, it's hard to get out. We want to be on our own. We want to do it ourselves. And there's a point where you've got to draw the line and you've got to go down and get these things. But we also don't want it to be made cushiony so that we lose that eagerness to get out there and make it on our own.

Mr. McMULLAN. You become institutionalized, even though you're living in your own house or whatever, when you start to depend on it. And you said it yourself, that we're an exception. And we're all making sacrifices, to keep whatever it is we might have. You're giving up something when you start getting into the welfare system.

Mrs. McMULLAN. Because you get used to them buying your food.

Mr. McMULLAN. We were different at the shelter. We had to assume position as parents to more than just our kids. There were adults there who were making, their transactions to us were as children to an adult or a parent, you know what I mean? These people were all in that system.

This one lady said that they'd been in and out of shelters, they'd been consumed by that system. They didn't know any better. And if you understand what I'm saying, we are responsible people. We've got it tough right now. And part of that responsibility is I guess you could say, let somebody else have those food stamps who's not responsible enough to take care of themselves.

Mrs. McMULLAN. In the shelters, they think it would be a very good idea to have professional counseling there. I don't mean a psychiatrist. Somebody that can counsel these people and help motivate them. Because by the time you hit there, there is no motivation. They have lost all hope. And they need somebody there to say hey, you're a good person, you've got a lot to offer. We were kind of motivaters up there and tried to keep, you know, besides keeping ourselves going, you know, you try and keep everybody else going up there, and people seemed to start looking to us as their support system, to try and, come on, you got to get out there, you've got to keep trying; you can't let this thing beat you. You can do it, you can do it. And to keep that drive going. But a lot of those people who don't have their partner there to keep prodding them, saying come on, let's go, let's go, we've got to do it, we've got to do it, are, you know, there was one lady who kind of just walked around in a daze, she had been down for so long. It was just like, there's no hope, I just can't get up any more. It's over, it's done. I'm giving up. I'm throwing in the towel.

And there's been times when we have both felt like that. And we've been fortunate that we never quite hit that at the same time. It's always one's been up and the other one's been down.

And they need motivation. They need people in there saying you can do it, you are a good person. Because you don't feel like a good person when you don't have a home and you're not providing anything for your family.

Chairman MILLER. Mrs. Boxer?

Mrs. BOXER. Yes. Thank you. Mrs. McMullan, I am very impressed with your commitment to this family, and your husband's, and I would like to echo Mr. Coats' comments that I feel that you are going to get out of this. And the reason you are is because of your attitude and the spirit that you have. And if we can help it along in any way by making this economy a little bit better and giving your husband and you the opportunity to be a productive part of the work force, you'll be out there and you'll be fine. And I have a sense of optimism that you will.

But it seems to me you have played a phenomenal role, not only with your own family, but with other people, as I hear you tell it. It seems to me that one of the problems is that people do lose the sense of hope and optimism. And once you've lost that, you just can't come back. You are going to get caught up in the system, and you're going to lose that self-esteem and self-confidence which you have managed to keep together between the two of you and the kids.

And that leads me to a question. It seems to me you're a victim of economic circumstances, plain and simple. I mean, other people who are homeless may have drug and alcohol problems, may have sexual abuse family histories, mental problems. You're a victim of economic circumstance here.

So for that group of you that make up an increasingly larger share of the homeless population, what services do you feel you need?

First of all, it's obvious you're saying we need to have more ability to take in families who are in this circumstance.

Now, once you're there, it seems to me we can reach you, or someone can reach you and help you. What type of services could you use? What type of services are missing in this situation you find yourself?

Mrs. MCMULLAN. We need—okay. I am a strong advocate for counseling people, keeping them motivated. People, also on the outside, need to be aware that—I had seen a news reel back in Montana about where a man's impression of the homeless was mostly what you see on the news media, they're drug addicts, they're alcoholics, they're the elderly sleeping in cardboard boxes, sleeping on benches, the bag lady.

And they seem to need to know that this is not the way it is. I mean sure, there is. But I'm saying there's a lot of us that are not alcoholics, not drug addicts. And the public needs to be more aware to reach out to these people, because there's a lot of them out there who really do want to work, for you know, economic reasons or whatever, they've lost everything. And you need an outreach to those people to have them, who would be more willing to come in and say hey, I've got a spot just for that man, right there.

Mrs. **Boxer**. So in other words, if we could create a solution to the problem, one solution would be a situation where there is a place for homeless families that when they get there and they have a decent situation, where they're not exposed to all the other traumas that are going on in the center, where there could be job counseling, psychological counseling, assistance to get you through that particular period of time. That would be a model.

Mrs. **McMullan**. Even if they had like spokespersons to go around to these businesses, you know, and say hey, if you have an opening——

Mrs. **Boxer**. Advocates, job counselors and advocates for the families.

Because what you're saying is there's a stereotype about the homeless.

I have one last question, for Yvette, Mr. Chairman, if I could.

Do you, honey, when you live your days, do you have a feeling that this is a temporary situation for your family, that someday soon you'll be out of this hotel, that you'll have a normal family life? Or do you sense that you may be stuck in the situation for a long time?

Ms. **Diaz**. I sense that we'll be out and living in an apartment again and being happy and not collecting food stamps or Welfare.

Mrs. **Boxer**. Good Well, you keep up that attitude. Thank you.

Chairman **Miller**. Mr. Holloway.

Mr. **Holloway**. I would have an observation for the family, to say undoubtedly there is help out there, and we're spending money on these programs, but it undoubtedly is not getting to the right places. In my interpretation of what you're saying, you were offered help from any number of organizations, but yet the help doesn't seem to be getting to the families or to the area where needed. A lot of times where we need help with families, we have no programs readily available.

So maybe we're spending our money in the wrong places and there may be money available, it's just not getting to the right place.

Am I correct in that? You were offered help from many different places, but just not for a family like yourself?

Mrs. **McMullan**. Right. We were offered help as long as we would divide our family. And I don't, you know, when we took our marriage vows, it says thick or thin, forever. And that's the way we're trying to live it. And I don't see why the system has the right to come in and say, I'm sorry, but the only way we can help you is if we divide you up. That's not the American dream here.

Mr. **Holloway**. I think in the Congress a lot of times we're always just wanting to send more money, more money. And we're not willing to take the money we're spending and put it in the right place, just to be honest with you. And I think sometimes we just want to allocate more and more and more money without trying to be a little more efficient and make the most of what we're doing. And I think that's a lot of our problem.

Mr. **McMullan**. I just wanted to, like he said, you know, we've all said here this morning, this is a, like our family and the families like ours, this is a new problem, the way I understand it; in our country. And the way a lot of the systems are working today are for old problems that kind of have grown old, wore out. But like you said, the funds are there, for old problems, you know. And they're still old problems and they still haven't been solved. This is a new problem. Maybe some redirecting of those funds, you know, the money is there to kind of tackle this new problem before it gets real out of hand. You guys remember the tent cities that were up just a few years ago in Texas and all that. I don't know what happened to those people, and their families.

Mrs. McMULLAN. I mean, you get people, you know, a lot of them out of the shelter, and then they end up on, they go from the shelter and then they go to Social Services and then they're on Welfare and then they spend maybe 18 years on Welfare, until the youngest one is off Welfare, or whatever the age limit is. And so now you're supporting that person for 18 years. And that's not an answer either. And I think that it should be made so that these people, providing they're mentally competent, should be forced to go to school. If you're going to be on Welfare, you have this amount of time to go to school, get some kind of an education and we will help you do that, and then you're off. You've got a time limit and you'd better get it together and get off the system and get out there.

I'm not one for these just live on Welfare forever and sit back. But you get an education, you go to your social worker and say okay, I'd like to do this kind of a job, and help that person get their training, help them get the babysitting and help them get that so they can do it and say you've got to do this. This is the only chance you're going to get. This is our help that we're offering you and when this is done this is it. Don't come to me just before you graduate and say, oh, I'm pregnant again, I can't finish school. Because this is it. This is your one big chance. Don't blow it. Because there won't be any more.

You know, I think we need to get a little bit more hard-nosed so they just don't get caught up in the Welfare system and just sit back and say well, it's going to be there every month until I die. Because then the kids grow up thinking that's the way it's got to be. You just sit back, collect your Welfare check and stay like that until you die. And that's not the way it is. I mean, it shouldn't have to be that way. There's a lot of opportunity. There's a lot of jobs out there.

Mr. HOLLOWAY. I think that's our responsibility. And I think that's something we have to do as Congress. Just so you know we're not all raised with silver spoons, I grew up in a bedroom with four boys and we were very poor, too. So I pretty well know where you come from.

We have to quit encouraging things. And I think in America today that's all we're doing. We're encouraging Welfare, we're encouraging people to go out. And if we open programs, just say let's spend endless amounts of dollars, there's no end to what we're going to create. There's 10 million families out there today that would like for us to furnish homes for them. So I think it's up to us to try to put the money in the right places. It's up to us as Congress to be receptive to the needs of the people and take the dollars and use them where they can be used the best, and if we don't do that, we'll never accomplish anything.

Chairman **MILLER**. Well, I suspect in the coming months, we'll all get a chance to figure out where we are on these issues, because they're all rushing at us like a headlong train here. Mr. Durbin.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Yvette, do you have any friends at the hotel your age that you can meet with or watch TV with?

Ms. **DIAZ**. Yes, I do.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Do you? Are there lots of kids in the hotel?

Ms. **DIAZ**. There's a lot.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Are there? Do some of them go to school with you, too? Same school?

Ms. **DIAZ**. M-hmm.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Do you do homework together or have time when you can get out of your apartment?

Ms. **DIAZ**. Every day.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Every day? What grade are you in?

Ms. **DIAZ**. Sixth grade.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Sixth grade? Do you have any ideas about what you would like to do when you get finished with school and get a chance to take a job?

Ms. **DIAZ**. Go to college.

Mr. **DURBIN**. You want to go to college? Did anybody in your family ever go to college?

Ms. **DIAZ**. My father.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Your father did? You said your father was in the Air Force, but he's in the State of Washington now?

Ms. **DIAZ**. M-hmm.

Mr. **DURBIN**. If I could ask the McMullan's a few questions.

Mrs. McMullan, you indicated that you had taken some courses and had some training and that you had graduated on Valentine's Day. What kind of training had you been taking?

Mrs. **MCMULLAN**. I'm an Emergency Medical Technician. I volunteered for the Fire Department, P.G. County Fire Department and they paid for my schooling. And I ride the ambulance and go out there with car accidents and——

Mr. **DURBIN**. Are you hoping to be offered a job doing that?

Mrs. **MCMULLAN**. I'm going to put my application in for Baltimore County. A number of hospitals I've called said to come down and put in applications because they don't run ads in the newspaper, they just go through their application file.

Mr. **DURBIN**. What is your formal education. How far did you go in school?

Mrs. **MCMULLAN**. I have two years of college. I graduated high school, I have two years of college. I was in a pre-nursing program back in Montana.

Mr. **DURBIN**. Do you and your husband ever talk about going back to Montana?

Mrs. **MCMULLAN**. Yes. All the time. I'd go back tomorrow if I could.

Mr. **DURBIN**. What's holding you back?

Mrs. **MCMULLAN**. There's no work there. It's beautiful, but you can't eat the scenery.

Mr. DURBIN. Tell me about medical care for your family. How do you provide for what you need by way of prescriptions, medicine, doctor care, and that sort of thing.

Mrs. MCMULLAN. Well, right now, we've been going to Chesapeake Health Care Plan. It's up at Francis Scott Key Hospital, and they go on a sliding pay scale.

Mr. DURBIN. So is it like a total medical care plan, and based on your income? Is that how it works?

Mrs. MCMULLAN. Yes, except for if they had to be hospitalized or something like that. That's just for the pediatric part, and your routine doctor things. If I had to go to a specialist or something, then you pay full price. Then I guess you apply for some kind of assistance or something.

Mr. DURBIN. Have you been able to keep up with it, though, through this private plan that you talked about?

Mrs. MCMULLAN. Yes.

Mr. DURBIN. Are there other families like yours in the shelter, where husband and wife are together with kids? Not in your shelter?

Mrs. MCMULLAN. Not in our shelter. In our shelter there was, there was a married couple. There were two married couples, but they didn't have any children. The guy that lives downstairs from us, him and his wife were there before us and they had two children and she was expecting their third.

Mr. DURBIN. Did you feel that you had available to you, if you needed it, training or additional education for pursuing a job?

[Mrs. McMullan nods in the negative.]

Mr. DURBIN. What held you back looking for that?

Mrs. MCMULLAN. When? You mean——

Mr. DURBIN. Well, let's say——

Mrs. MCMULLAN. While in the shelter?

Mr. DURBIN. When you were living in the shelter, did you have an opportunity——

Mrs. MCMULLAN. I was going to school. I was still going to school for the Fire Department two nights a week, and riding the ambulance one night a week, trying to keep up my obligation to the Fire Department.

Mr. DURBIN. Was there other training or courses available to you, any kind of job counseling as to what you might look into? Did you find that on your own?

Mrs. MCMULLAN. Yes. I went down and—because it was looking like it was going to be a long way before I could ever go back to college and finish and get my R.N., and this was a way, for one night a week to ride the ambulance, and they were going to pick up the tab for my books and my education to do it. It was a four-month course. And then my nursing background, my little pre-nursing that I had was a help. But not everybody is into the nursing field, either.

Mr. DURBIN. I have to join my colleagues in saying that there is something special about your family.

Mrs. MCMULLAN. Thank you.

Mr. DURBIN. You're going to make it. And unfortunately, we're not going to help you as much as we should. But we're going to try to change that. Thank you for joining us.

Mrs. McMULLAN. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Mrs. Johnson.

Mrs. JOHNSON. Thank you. And I certainly join my colleagues in my admiration for you both and for your family.

When you look back on the situation in Montana, what would it have taken in the way of assistance for you to have been able to retain your home and go through a period of retraining or trying to find other work?

Mrs. McMULLAN. We had reached—my husband had just gone to school for two years, and I had been in school. And the town is——

Mrs. JOHNSON. Were you working part time jobs during that time?

Mrs. McMULLAN. I was. I had my own little business, a very small business, of my own. I was grooming dogs.

Mrs. JOHNSON. But during the school year, I mean during those school years, you did support yourselves?

Mrs. McMULLAN. Yes. We—the town right now is drying up, and they are expecting it to eventually be a living—ghost town. There'll be nobody there left. There is, you drive down in the town and you have four to five houses sitting empty on every block and up for sale. Main Street used to be six blocks long, and if you could condense it from all the buildings that have sort of burnt down, it would probably only be about three blocks long. A major car dealership moved. We had three lumber companies. One moved out, one burned down. Everything seems to sort of be burning and leaving, rapidly. And I talked to a friend here and she says it's still, everybody's still leaving, leaving, leaving, leaving.

Mrs. JOHNSON. So you did absolutely have to leave. When you got out here, you apparently were able to start off on the basis of your savings and employment?

Mrs. McMULLAN. No. By the time we got here, we didn't have any left. And we moved in with my mother in law, and we were living in her basement, seven of us. And she had an old car that she let my husband use to get him back and forth to work until we could get a little money. And then he sent for me. See, he came out with the two babies and our oldest, because I was too pregnant to fly. I didn't realize that you cannot fly after you're about eight months.

So my oldest son and I stayed with some friends back in Montana until after we had the baby, and then we joined them. That was back when they had the discount rates, you know, it was like $80 for us all to fly.

Mrs. JOHNSON. And did you finally then move out into your own apartment?

Mrs. McMULLAN. M-hmm.

Mrs. JOHNSON. And when you lost that apartment, when your husband moved to a different job, what was the difference? In other words, what would it have cost a government program to be able to help you stay in that apartment, per month, until you were able to find another place, so that you wouldn't have been evicted?

Mrs. McMULLAN. Okay. Our rent was $449 a month. And we were——

Mrs. JOHNSON. What would you have been able to pay?

Mrs. McMULLAN. About half.

Mrs. Johnson. And so the problem was that there wasn't any housing for families for $220 a month?

Mrs. McMullan. Down in the City of Baltimore, there is.

Mr. McMullan. Yes. You can get downtown there, if you want to live there. You're making another sacrifice. And that's all of us, our future. And I'm exposing my children to things that this little girl over here has to live with every day.

Mrs. McMullan. Yes.

Mr. McMullan. You pick one thing, and you give up another.

Mrs. McMullan. We looked at one place, $225 a month. It was three bedrooms. And this guy was going to be real picky about renting to us. And you went in there, and my husband about fell through the hole in the floor in the dining room. And for a kitchen they had a free-standing bathroom sink.

Mr. McMullan. That was it.

Mrs. McMullan. That was it. No cabinets, no shelves, no countertop, nothing.

Mr. McMullan. No stove or refrigerator.

Mrs. McMullan. Obviously. And then there was, you know, you had to dig through all the beer bottles and the booze cans and everything to even get to the place. This was down on Gay Street in Baltimore. And everybody said, you don't want to live down there. And I'm going, we can't afford anything else. Like right now we're living in a one-bedroom apartment. We found somebody who would rent to us.

Mr. McMullan. But he's violating some kind of law by doing it.

Mrs. Johnson. I'm sure he is. How long have you been out, then, of the Salvation Army?

Mr. McMullan. A month.

Mrs. McMullan. Almost a month.

Mrs. Johnson. And so your goal is then to save up and to be able to get a larger place?

Mr. McMullan. See, we still pay our past bills, utility bills, phone bills. That's part of being responsible in this country, and we're still trying to accomplish that, you know.

Mrs. McMullan. From back in Montana.

Mr. McMullan. We bought a car here with some money that we accumulated after I was here. And the guy has let us go for six months, because we keep in contact with him and let him know that we are responsible because we can't pay the insurance on the car and maintenance our family at the same time. Somebody had made a comment about well, you got a car, why don't you go get a job? Well,——

Mrs. McMullan. It's real hard to drive it when you don't have——

Mr. McMullan. You can't leave your kids in the shelter there, you know, then you're driving them around in a car that once they—if they arrest you or stop you for that, you know, which is the law, they take your plates and they give you a fine and most likely the driver is in some kind of trouble. And then you expose your kids to another danger.

Mrs. Johnson. So actually what you're talking about is a relatively small amount of money that stands between you and transportation and you and a place that your kids and you could hope to have——

Mr. McMullan. Yes.

Mrs. Johnson [continuing]. The quality of life and the educational experience that they need. You're really talking $300, $400 a month.

Mr. McMullan. Yes.

Mrs. Johnson. And are there any sources of low-interest loans?

Mrs. McMullan. We don't have any credit left.

Mr. McMullan. Our credit is——

Mrs. McMullan. In fact, our credit is so bad they can't even find us any longer.

Mr. McMullan. But that's another story. But see, the thing is, you know, when you have all these other bills, you know, they've been patient, and now they're having to report us to credit agencies and all that kind of stuff. And then, see, we're even qualified to file bankruptcy. But that's not an answer to the problem, anyway.

Mrs. McMullan. And we've been trying to avoid filing bankruptcy because these people have been really patient with us and——

Mr. McMullan. It's being responsible, you know.

Mrs. McMullan. Taking our little bit that we do send them, and because these people trusted us, you know, they gave us medical services, they gave us a phone, they gave us utilities, and now we owe for it. And I don't want to cheat these people out of it by filing bankruptcy. You know, it's going to be an absolute last resource.

Mrs. Johnson. Excuse me.

Chairman Miller. Mr. Wortley.

Mrs. Johnson. I've used my time. But I do appreciate your being very direct with us and giving us some better understanding of the fact that we create really much more serious and much bigger problems for children and for families by having programs that irrationally constrain and don't provide help at the right time to intact family groups. And I appreciate your being here today.

Chairman Miller. You know, you have to understand something. Unfortunately, in this country when we draft legislation, we always draft it for the worst case. We draft it on the theory that we have to deal with the family that's going to cheat us and cheat everybody else, and therefore we strip people of all their resources. Instead of drafting on the basis that there are people out there who are good people who are in serious trouble, we've drafted it that there's bum people out there who are going to take advantage of the situation. We draft overly restrictively so that we won't ride with people who have their own initiative to get out of the situation that they're in. We constantly work on the basis that the system is filled with nothing but people who would take advantage if given the opportunity. It's a tragedy in terms of the flexibility of the law to recognize individual cases.

Mrs. McMullan. Yes. Because then eventually you end up sliding down——

Chairman Miller. Well, it ends up more expensive for us in the long run, I think, as Mrs. Johnson pointed out. If we would ride with you for a few hundred dollars, we would probably in the long run waive ourselves many thousands of dollars because we let you get into more trouble before we'll bail you out the next time.

Mr. McMullan. We like to be part of the "we" organization, like you say "we," I'd like to continue to assume the position as one of the "we."

Chairman Miller. That's right.

And we all too often turn it into an adversarial situation immediately and it's they against us or you and me, whatever. Mr. Wortley.

Mr. Wortley. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sorry I was late arriving here and didn't hear the beginning of your testimony.

How long have you lived in your present shelter?

Mr. McMullan. Sir, right now we are living in a one-bedroom apartment in Dundalk and we've been there close to a month. We moved out of the Salvation Army almost a month ago.

Mr. Wortley. Is there a time limit on how long the Salvation Army lets you stay?

Mr. McMullan. 21 days.

Mr. Wortley. 21 days? And who came up with the rent for the existing apartment you're in?

Mrs. McMullan. I went around and applied to different charities, like the 700 Club and Franciscan Center and some of the churches in our area, like the church that we now belong to, they help donate, they get 25 here, 50 there, 25 over here, 30. And that's how we got up our first month's rent and our deposit. And that's how we got our, a lot of our furniture.

Mr. Wortley. What are you going to do for next month's rent?

Mrs. McMullan. Pardon?

Mr. Wortley. What are you going to do for next month's rent? What will you do——

Mrs. McMullan. Oh, we've got it. We've managed to hang on to it. Somebody has donated some more money——

Mr. Wortley. Good.

Mrs. McMullan [continuing]. Through the Salvation Army for us.

Mr. Wortley. How did you happen to locate this apartment you're now in or this one room; did the Social Services Department steer you to it or the Salvation Army?

Mrs. McMullan. No. No. This man had, somehow his name and address and phone number is hanging on a bulletin board at the Salvation Army. And I called to see if he had anything larger than a one or two bedroom, or a—yes, one or two bedroom and he did, but it was out of our reach. And he said he was willing to rent a one bedroom to us until either something opened up that we could afford, or we could just stay in the one bedroom.

Mr. Wortley. How many other families are there living in this dwelling unit that you're in?

Mrs. McMullan. Five.

Mr. Wortley. Five?

Mrs. McMullan. No. Four.

Mr. Wortley. Four? What are their hopes and their aspirations?

Mrs. McMullan. Well, we have aspiring rock stars living next door. We have——

Mr. Wortley. They keep you up late at night?

Mrs. McMULLAN. Yes. We were up 'till Midnight last night.

We have a pair of retarded people on the top floor. And next door to them right above us we have a husband and wife, an uncle and their three children. And then down in the basement we have a man and his wife and their two children, and the third one is due in I think a couple more months. And then they rented the entire basement down there. It's two apartments and they just kind of run back and forth.

Mr. COATS. Would the gentleman yield for just one question?

Mr. WORTLEY. I yield to the gentleman from Indiana.

Mr. COATS. Something has been running through my mind. One of the things we encourage is the extended family, and we all bemoan the breakup of the family. And I noticed in your testimony, I think you referenced it, that you lived with your mother-in-law for a period of time; and when you were able to financially get an apartment, you did. Was it an option, when things got tough again, to move back in with her? I understand it's not easy to live with your mother-in-law. But your other descriptions in terms of the Salvation Army, crowded room, six people in it, the situation you just described doesn't sound real great either. I just wondered if that was a possibility.

Mrs. McMULLAN. Where we're at right now is the best place we've been in since we came to Maryland. No, except for the other apartment. We had a three-bedroom apartment.

Mr. COATS. But I mean from a financial standpoint.

Mr. McMULLAN. There was no—we were living right outside of D.C. here. And the job that I had, you know, it's just the way things have been happenning, wasn't paying me enough money to, I couldn't afford to rent a house. And we ran into the same thing. Well, you've got, there's six of you in your family, you need to rent a four bedroom house. So that option was out, and I was still staying in my mother's basement. And of course there was an overcrowding situation there, you know. We were violating her rights. One bathroom and all that kind of business. So there was no option to move back to her house. There was no base cash to go and rent a house to live in it long enough to be evicted here or any of that kind of stuff. What happened, we packed up and left and went and stayed with a friend of ours, at a friend of mine over in Reba. But we didn't have the option to stay back at her house or anything like that.

Mr. COATS. Thank you.

Mr. WORTLEY. How many of your children go to school?

Mrs. McMULLAN. Two.

Mr. WORTLEY. Two of them go to school? It has to be a disruptive process in their life. Do they move from one school to another, your mother-in-law's and one that might have been near the Salvation Army?

Mrs. McMULLAN. We have moved, they have moved schools three times since the beginning of September.

Mr. WORTLEY. Three times since the beginning of September?

Mrs. McMULLAN. Since September. They were going in P.G. County and then they were going over in Baltimore City and now they're going to a Baltimore County school.

Mr. **Wortley**. How severely does this impact upon their learning process, I mean the grades they're getting in school?

Mr. **McMullan**. They could be valedictorians from what I see, because they carry B averages.

Mrs. **McMullan**. They're pulling a straight B average.

Mr. **Wortley**. That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

Mr. **McMullan**. But then you're back to the family. A team, you know.

Mrs. **McMullan**. Yes, because as soon as they get home, boom, they hit the kitchen table and homework is done before they even sneeze. My oldest is old enough to understand——

Mr. **McMullan**. You've got to do that. You're salvaging whatever there is for those kids. We know what the problems are. But that's a routine that you've got to keep hold of.

Mrs. **McMullan**. And these two are old enough. They see the hardship that we have gone through with having kids and going to school at the same time, and my daughter is going, I am not going to do that. I am not getting married before I am 20 years old, I am not having any children until I graduate college and I will graduate and I will marry a graduate.

Chairman **Miller**. Thank you very much.

Mrs. **McMullan**. Thank you.

Chairman **Miller**. You're more than welcome to sit through the rest of the testimony. I just wanted to make it a little bit easier in terms of the children. And I want to thank Jamie and Ryan and Morgan and Ryder for coming and talking with us this morning, also.

Yvette, you're more than welcome to stay here also. But I just thought it might be a little bit easier. We have some more witnesses to hear from.

So thank you. Bye, Bye. Thanks. Bye.

Mr. **McMullan**. Say Goodbye, Ryder.

Chairman **Miller**. And I'd also like to ask if the members of Panel 2, Nancy Boxill and James Wright and Tricia Fagan, could come forward, too, and we'll kind of condense these into two for the purposes of questioning.

Okay, can we go ahead?

TESTIMONY OF KAY YOUNG McCHESNEY, PH.D., DIRECTOR, HOMELESS FAMILIES PROJECT, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, CA

Ms. **McChesney**. The first thing I'd like to say is that there are a significant number of homeless families on our streets now in the United States, for the first time since the Depression.

In the Depression, we were running 20, 25 percent unemployment. Why? Why do we have homeless families now? We don't have 25 percent unemployment. I'd like to just basically say that we've had massive structural changes. Between 1979 and 1983 there was a rapid increase in poverty, about a 49 percent increase in the number of people living below the poverty line. And during that time, a 25 percent increase in the number of families with at least one child under the age of 18.

At the same time that we had a rapid increase in the number of families that could only afford low income housing, we had a decrease in the number of available low income housing units, by about 20 percent.

The result was predictable, except no one seemed to be thinking about it. But we had an acute low income housing shortage. By 1985, the ratio was nationally nearly two households who needed, who could only afford low income housing for every available household. In California, one of the hardest hit states, where I come from, the ratio is nearly four to one.

The first condition was an acute low-income housing shortage. At that point in time, in late 1984, early 1985, finding that we knew almost nothing about homeless families, I wrote up a protocol and was funded by the Ford Foundation. and did a study of homeless families. The purpose was to determine how families became homeless.

We did, over a period of 18 months, from 1985 through July of 1986, intensive interviews of 87 mothers in five shelters, five of the ten shelters in Los Angeles County that handled either mothers and children or couples with children.

The interviews ranged up to three hours in length and were tape-recorded and transcribed. And we also collected a number of other kinds of data. And staff members lived in three of the five shelters in which we worked.

I'd like to give you just a little bit of the basics. Seventy percent of the sample families were headed by 30 mothers. Thirty percent by couples. Of the couples, two-thirds were married couples. The sample was 55 percent black, this is mothers now, a third Caucasian, about 9 percent Latino, and we know they were under-represented for various reasons. A typical mother had two and a quarter children under the age of 18 with an average of two of them in the shelter.

The mothers were young. Mean age, 28. The children were very young. Mean age of 6 or median age of 5.

Basically, there are several important findings in the study that I'd like to briefly outline.

The first was that families are homeless because they're poor. Now, that might sound obvious, but it doesn't turn out to be. Various and sundry media representations of the homeless seem to indicate well, a lot of them are psychiatrically disabled or a lot of them are substance abusers. That did not turn out to be true at all of the sample of our study, nor has it been in the one other large study of homeless families. Families are homeless because they're poor.

We found, however, that they were not all poor for the same reasons. We identified four different kinds of families that seemed to make up our sample.

The first kind you have just heard from—the unemployed couple. The problem there is that Dad has lost his job. And often he supported the family well, as a construction worker or a machinist or a welder. He used up his unemployment. Half of the families out of that group are literally migrating across country, just as this family has done, looking for work.

In fact, this family told me off the mike that they had a choice. They had family in D.C. and they had family in L.A. And their L.A. relatives said don't come here, there isn't any work. So they came to Washington, D.C. That was kind of how it was for the families in our study. They literally went, for these unemployed couples, from city to city, and they would stay in each one for a couple of weeks, looking for work. And when they didn't find it, then there you'd have it. They finally ended up in Los Angeles. So that was one group.

The second group, mothers who are leaving relationships. Essentially, they shared with the first group the characteristic that they had been supported by a man who had a good job, often well above the poverty line. But when the relationship broke up, say he was beating them, he locked them out, something like that, sometimes they left, they lost their only means of support, and they were literally out on the street, often at 10:00 or 11:00 at night, with only the clothes they had on themselves and their children on their backs. That was it. Emergency situation.

The third group, AFDC mothers. Mothers who'd been supported primarily by Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The problem for these mothers was what I call the squeeze. California, as you know, has one of the highest AFDC payments in the country, but it isn't enough, given the acute housing shortage in Los Angeles. HUD's own figures for Los Angeles County show the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Los Angeles County at $491 a month. Now, a Welfare mother in 1985 with one child got $448 a month plus food stamps. Even then, with the rents starting at around $350, it wasn't enough. And eventually, she had to choose between essentials like diapers and food, or paying her rent. And she ended up leaving through eviction or in advance of eviction.

The fourth group was the most surprising group, totally unexpected on my part, and I think important to relate to June Bucy's work. And that is mothers who share the common history of having been severely abused as children, coming then to the attention most often of foster care, removed to foster placements where they were generally sexually abused. The kids then run away. And the word "runaway," it gives you this little image of this kid that didn't want to come in for curfew at 10:00 o'clock, with the parents anxiously waiting by the door and that's just not how it is These women had been abused to the point of torture, frequently. The abuse was severe. And so when they quote "run away," actually, they're leaving horrendous situations, and they, as she said, end up on the street.

And we often wonder, well, what happens to these runaways? In Los Angeles County, we estimate there may be as many as 10,000 homeless teenagers. It's one of the capitals in the world for kids. And we just doubled our shelter capacity for kids to 45 beds for 10,000 kids. Well, what happens to them?

Well, some of them at least turn up in my study. And at the age of 19, 20, 21, now they're homeless young mothers with an infant of their own. And they're particularly hopeless. They have no one, no family to turn to, nothing, there's just nothing there.

Those are the four kinds of origin of the poverty of the families, why it was that they just couldn't afford housing in Los Angeles.

Let me just briefly review a couple of other findings.

The first thing that had to happen for a family to become homeless was they had to be poor. The second thing was, one of the members raised the issue well, shouldn't they be staying with relatives or family? The situation of the family we just heard from was typical. What we found was that families either had no one to turn to, no families of their own, or exhausted the resources of their own family before they became formally homeless, ended up in the street, in a shelter, or in a car.

We found an extraordinary number of mothers who had deceased parents. Fully 16 percent of the sample mothers were actually orphans. And half of the deceased parents had died before these young mothers were 21, so that we had actually literally families that weren't there to turn to. Parents and siblings were either dead, lived out of town where they weren't any help, or were, had no housing resources of their own to share, or were severely estranged from the family that was in need of help. So literally, these families had no one to turn to.

I'd like to mention just a couple of other important issues that were raised in the study.

There were, in Los Angeles County, unlike New York State, where we heard from, and Massachusetts and several other places that have shelter systems for families, Los Angeles County, 8.1 million people estimated, had no federal, state, city or county shelters of any sort for homeless families.

As a result, I interviewed mothers with infants as young as two weeks who had had to live on the streets, literally, with their babies, who became ill, because there was nowhere to go. Mothers living in garbage dumpsters. Mothers living in the apartment, the laundry building behind her brother in law's apartment building. That kind of thing. The private agencies were working desperately to fill the need, and there just wasn't enough. Daily, every shelter that we worked in, we worked in five shelters, turned away families for lack of space.

And the problems were simply very, very difficult.

I guess I'd like to finally turn to some of the effects of homelessness on children in the families. Family life is totally disrupted by homelessness, as you can hear. Parents who don't know where the next meal is coming from or where they're going to sleep that night struggle just to meet basic physical needs. Mothers who have not yet had to live in the street, as this mother talked about, were terrified at the prospect. Mothers and children, parents and children who had already been living in cars or on the street were afraid on the one hand of being mugged and raped and on the other hand, as you heard, of having their children taken away from them by police because they were endangering them, under California endangerment statutes.

And curiously enough, in the State of California, the only state funding, it's actually FEMA funding, has been interpreted by the state to be used for emergency shelter for homeless children only once they are taken from their parents.

So we have the curious position that the state will not do anything to care for the families to prevent them from being evicted or assist them in finding housing, but if the children are taken from the parents because the families are on the street, then the state will use FEMA funds to pay several hundred dollars a month for each child to be placed in probably inadequate foster care.

Oh, goodness. Finally, what would you expect, the effects of homelessness on children. They range from awful to worse. It depends on the length of time the children and their parents have been homeless and on the conditions. Kids that have been in the street are in worse shape than kids that have been in cars and kids who have been in cars are in worse shape than kids who have only had to be in shelters, and so on.

Basically, there are three major effects. First, homeless children experience developmental delays. They didn't walk, talk or sit up on time.

Second, there were examples of developmental regression. Twelve year olds reverted to wetting the bed at night. Children who had been potty trained went back to diapers. And so on and so forth. Kids quit talking.

Third, mothers reported other stress symptoms typical of children experiencing major disruptions in their lives. Toddlers Ryan's age would cry and cling and not want to leave their mothers at all, even in the shelter. Older children had nightmares, sleep disturbance, and some rocking, other kinds of things which I believe one of my colleagues from Atlanta here will probably talk a little bit about.

Fourth, children sleeping outside or in cars often became ill.

And finally, in Los Angeles, children weren't going to school at all. Often, no matter how hard the parents tried to keep them in school, and you have to remember that these shelters, being private shelters and totally overburdened, had a maximum stay of only four weeks. They couldn't go to school, quite literally.

So—what does that mean?

Chairman MILLER. Well, let me just explain. We're going to be going into session, so to the extent you could summarize.

Ms. MCCHESNEY. All right. I will simply close by saying that emergency assistance is needed for families, but that is a bandaid solution, as has already been suggested. And what we're really talking about here is a poverty problem and a housing problem. And to the extent that we ignore ways to assist families so that they get out of the, so they find work, which is what they need, and that we can assist with housing problems, then we are really addressing the problem.

It's not getting better. The statistics continue to look as though nationally, the acute housing problem is worse and continuing to worsen, and I'm very pleased that you're holding these hearings and I sincerely hope that you will be able to do something about it in terms of jobs programs and Welfare reform that will help the families that are in need of your assistance. Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Dr. Boxill?

[Prepared statement of Kay Young McChesney follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF KAY YOUNG MCCHESNEY, PH.D., DIRECTOR, HOMELESS FAMILIES PROJECT, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The current crisis in homelessness among families[1] is the result of an increase in the number of low-income families and a decrease in the amount of low-income housing. By 1983, there were 25 percent more families living below the poverty line than there had been in 1979[1]. while at the same time there was a decrease of 20 percent in the number of affordable low-income housing units available[2] . By 1985 Dolbeare[3] estimated that nationally there were twice as many low-income households as there were low-cost housing units. In California, the ratio was nearly four to one. Many of these low-income households were families--one or more adults caring for at least one child under the age of 18. Those who could increased the percentage of their income spent on rent, or doubled up with family or friends. The remainder became homeless.

The purpose of the Homeless Families Project, funded by the Ford Foundation, was to describe how and why families became homeless. From April 1985 through July of 1986, members of the project staff interviewed 87 mothers of children under the age of

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[1] Throughout this paper, "family" will refer to a single mother or a couple with one or more children under the age of 18.

18 in five shelters for homeless families in Los Angeles County. The shelters were chosen to represent major geographic areas of the county. Within each shelter families were selected for interviewing on a convenience basis. Mothers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. Interviews ranged up to 5 hours in length, were tape recorded and transcribed. Quantitative data were also collected. Project staff members also lived in three of the five shelters as participant observers.

Mothers were young, with a median age of 28. Fifty-five percent were black; a third were white. Latinos, at nine percent, were known to be underrepresented in the sample. Mothers averaged 2.25 children under the age of 18, and had an average of two children with them in the shelter. Children in the shelters were young, with a mean age of 5.6 years and a median age of five years.

There were several important findings that I would like to mention briefly before turning to the effects of homelessness on children and families. First, these families were homeless because they were poor. Rates of substance abuse and of psychiatric hospitalization for mothers were relatively low. The primary problem was that the families did not have enough money to pay the going rate for housing in Los Angeles, where the median rent for a one-bedroom apartment in 1985 was $491 (HUD).

Second, these families had exhausted not only their own funds but also the resources of family and friends. By the time they became homeless they literally did not have anyone to turn to. For them, the 'family safety net' was not operative. Their parents and siblings were either deceased, out of town, estranged, or had no housing of their own to offer the about-to-become homeless family.

Third, while homeless families were all poor, they were not all poor for the same reasons. Four types of families emerged from accounts of the histories of their poverty prior to homelessness: unemployed couples, mothers leaving relationships, AFDC mothers and mothers who had been homeless teens.

Unemployed couples were primarily white married couples. Typically, the husband had previously supported the family with an industrial age job--construction worker, machinist, welder. However, the husband had been laid off, and when his unemployment benefits ran out, the family became destitute. Many of these families were migrating, stopping and looking for work in each city they passed through. Finding none, they moved on from city to city, eventually arriving in Los Angeles.

Mothers leaving relationships were also primarily white, and had also been supported by their men prior to becoming homeless. However, when the relationship ended, their means of support ended. Often they were leaving men who had abused them or their children. Sometimes they had been thrown out or locked out, and sometimes they had just decided the relationship wasn't viable anymore. When that happened, lacking family or friends to turn to, they then became homeless.

AFDC mothers had been primarily supported by Aid to Families with Dependent Children prior to becoming homeless. Their problem was "the squeeze." Although California has one of the highest AFDC benefits in the nation, it wasn't enough to pay the going rates for housing in Los Angeles. In 1985 a mother with one child received $448 a month. With housing in even the cheapest inner-city areas ranging from $350 a month on up, eventually mothers had to choose between necessities like diapers and food and paying their rent. Eventually they were evicted or forced out in advance of eviction.

Finally, mothers who had been homeless teens shared a common history. They reported having been severly abused by their parents as children, and had usually been made wards of the court as young teens. As older teens they ran away from foster placements, often sexually abusive foster placements, becoming homeless teenagers living on the streets of Los Angeles. (It has been estimated that there may be as many as 10,000 homeless teens on the streets in Los Angeles, and there are all of 45 shelter beds to serve them.) Eventually, these young women became pregnant, and when I interviewed them they were in their early twenties with one child, usually an infant. They were among the most hopeless of all the families in the study. These young women had little education, no work experience, and being estranged from their families had no one to turn to. They often had to resort to prostitution to get enough money to feed their babies, and even then they couldn't come up with enough money to put a roof over their heads.

A fourth finding stems from the fact that there were no federal, state, city or county shelters for homeless families in

Los Angeles County in 1985-86. As a result, I interviewed women with infants as young as two weeks who had been forced to sleep on the streets because they had been unable to get into a shelter. I also interviewed women with infants as young as three days in the shelter. Since the shelters we worked in had virtually 100 percent occupancy, and turned away families daily for lack of space, that suggests that there are probably mothers who go "home" from the maternity hospital straight to the streets. In short, this study suggests that the private sector in Los Angeles County simply does not have enough resources to meet the need for emergency services for homeless families. Further, private sector agencies seemed even less able to meet long-term needs for transitional and permanent housing for these families. The maximum stay at shelters was usually four weeks. Only one of the five shelters we worked in was making any attempt to place families in permanent housing, and this one was having only moderate success. Thus, families were typically discharged from the shelter back to the streets or to another shelter.

Now I would like to turn to the effects of homelessness on children and families. Family life is totally disrupted by homelessness. Parents who do not know where the next meal is coming from or where they will sleep that night struggle just to meet basic physical needs. Mothers who have not yet had to live in the street are terrified at the prospect; mothers who are already living there are afraid of being mugged and raped on the one hand and of having their children taken away from them by police on the other. Even once they are in the shelter, the nightmare is not over, because mothers know that they and their children will likely have to go back to living in the streets when their time in the shelter is up.

Effects of homelessness on children varied by the length of time they had been homeless and by the type of homelessness. In general, the longer the family had been homeless, the more their apparent distress. Likewise, the worse their situation, the greater the effects of homelessness, with children who had been living on the street in the worst shape, followed by kids who had been living in cars, followed by kids who had only had to live in the shelter.

Mothers' reports on the effects of homelessness on their children suggested four basic effects. First, homeless children experienced developmental delays--they did't walk, talk or sit up on time. Second, children exhibited developmental regression. Twelve year olds reverted to wetting the bed at night. Children who had been potty trained went back to diapers. Children who had been walking went back to crawling. Third, mothers reported other stress symptoms typical of children experiencing major disruptions in their lives, including excessive crying and clinging in infants and toddlers, nightmares and sleep disturbance in older children. Fourth, children sleeping outside or in cars often became ill, most often with colds and ear infections. Finally, it's important to mention that for the most part, homeless children were not able to attend school. Elementary school children simply fell behind; teenagers reported that they were going to have to repeat semesters or full years because they had missed too much school to receive credit towards high school graduation.

Many of you have children. Perhaps the best way to try to imagine what being homeless is like is to think of the daily routine you go through in loving and caring for your child and then try to imagine how being homeless would affect it. What would you do--how would you feel--if you couldn't feed your child and she was crying because she was hungry; if you couldn't change your baby because you had no diapers; if it was cold and you had no coats and no blankets and not enough gas to keep the car running so that the heater would stay on? These were all experiences reported by mothers.

Members of the Committee: The crisis of homeless families is real. You, as members of Congress, are among the few who have the power to attempt to deal with it. I hope that you will have the courage--the moral vision--to do what is necessary.

1. Danzier, S. and P. Gottschalk. 1985. "The changing economic circumstances of children: Families losing ground." Madison, Wisconsin: Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Paper #801-85.

2. Dolbeare, C. 1986. "Rental Housing Crisis Index." National Low-Income Housing Coalition.

3. Dolbeare, C. 1986. "Rental Housing Crisis Index." National Low Income Housing Coalition.

TESTIMONY OF NANCY A. BOXILL, PH.D., ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK, ATLANTA UNIVERSITY, ATLANTA, GA

Ms. BOXILL. Understanding the effects of homelessness on children begins with understanding the context of their lives. What I want to do is summarize for you the daily life of children who live in shelters in Atlanta.

The day begins when the children are awakened by their mothers at 5:00 a.m. in the morning. In a cavernous and yet crowded gym, the children help their mothers disassemble their beddings, store their bedding, get dressed, pack their belongings, and hope to receive a cold snack.

By 6:30 in the morning, they must leave the shelter, taking all their belongings with them. Preschool children are accompanied by their mothers to the children's day shelter across town. Once there, they wait in a parking lot hoping to get a space inside. The shelter serves only 30 children and admittance is on a first come, first served basis.

The 30 children at the front of the line spend the rest of their day at the shelter. Their mothers may not stay with them. There is simply no room.

Small children therefore are left in a strange place with strangers. They are safe and warm, but they are away from their mothers. Those children turned away from the shelter spend their day either wandering the streets with their mothers or accompanying their mothers to job interviews, social service appointments, or sitting idly in a women's day shelter. Even tiny tots must help their mothers carry their belongings around town until the night shelter opens at 7:00 p.m. Often as a kindness, the Police transport the children from one shelter to another. Eating a meal is not something that is guaranteed. These children do not engage in American life. They only observe it passing them by. They are the watchers.

School aged children leave the shelter at 6:30 in the morning. They walk to the nearest school bus stop where they wait perhaps two hours on street corners, unsupervised, and often in the dark. Knowing that they may not remain in a particular school, they often deliberately avoid social interaction and involvement in school activities. They hope for anonymity. They don't want to be identified as being homeless.

When the school day ends, they return to the same bus stop to watch their peers go home. They must at all cost avoid anyone knowing that they live at a shelter.

From 3:30 to 7:00 p.m. when the night shelter opens, they have to find a way to be safe. They wait for a turn to be an ordinary child. Occasionally, Police again will transport them from one shelter to another.

About 5:30 p.m., families begin to meet at predetermined places to begin the process of finding a shelter for the night. Finally, after 14 hours of carrying and guarding their belongings, these families can rest. In large public spaces, they group themselves as families. In public bathrooms they wash, themselves and their clothes, taking turns and hoping for a moment of family life. Mothers sleep with their children on mats and cots on gymnasium floors. Children, homeless children, live in public spaces 24 hours a day and wait for a home.

Homeless children do not find the world a wondrous place for joyful discovery. Homeless children are the waiters and the watchers.

Among the findings in the research conducted by Anita Beaty of the Atlanta Task Force For the Homeless and myself are a couple that I'd like to share with you that capture their experience.

One theme is that the children have an intense desire to proclaim their own self worth. The children resist adult attempts to clump them into categories of deprived, poor or pitiful children. I think you saw some examples this morning.

Debra, an eight year old, was in the kitchen with me cleaning up after we served dinner to the persons in the shelter. She asked me if she could have a job to do. So I gave her a job. She said to me, I'm finished, Nancy, give me another job. So I gave her a second job to do. I gave her a third job to do. She announced that she was all done, and I praised her warmly and told her that I was sure her mother was very pleased to have such a good helper in the family. She said, will you give me something for doing my jobs? I said no, I have nothing to give you. Quite seriously she said yes, yes, you do. My mind anticipated a request for money or dessert. I asked, what do I have to give? She said, you can give me a hug. You can always give a hug when you have nothing else to give.

Kevin, age 6, asserted himself in a different way. He entered the kitchen forcefully and clearly requested more food from the volunteers. With pride and manners, he said, may I have seconds? But don't give me any of that chicken. I don't like it. I want the other meat. What I heard and saw was his refusal to allow nameless adults to describe his world. I watched him feeling confident about his ability to discriminate and to be known by his likes and dislikes.

There are many ways in which the children of all ages continually found to say who they were. For most children in the shelter, tomorrow is a fuzzy and ambiguous prospect. There is only the certainty of the morning routine of leaving the shelter. The remainder of the day is not assured. Among themselves, the children speak about being different from other children. They know that they acquire the basic things of life in ways that are different from other children.

Nothing, no part of their day is predictable. They live in a gap of uncertainty.

The final example is Keisha, who is 9, who expressed a profound ambivalence about her place in the world. She hung herself around my neck and back asking me how many children I had. I said none. Oh, she said. My mom says that people who don't have children are blessed. Not believing my ears, I said, she's right, it is a blessing to have childen. With firmness, she said no, she said people who don't have children are blessed. Her whole body asked me what I thought. I felt her question deep on my insides. Much later in the evening, before I left the shelter, I found Keisha and told her that I was sure that meeting her was a blessing in my life.

Our findings show that these children are over-anxious, sad, angry, lonely, depressed, frustrated and cautious. They are at high risk to succumb to the scourges of poverty. Their behavior is reflective of and congruent with their circumstances. Their behavior is out of order because their lives are out of order.

The Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, the Phyllis Wheatley YMCA, the Junior League, and other agencies and organizations, are doing what they can, but the efforts of a few cannot possibly solve a systemic problem.

I believe that the way one forms a question, Mr. Chairman, prescribes the answer. I have begun to call homeless children the waiters and the watchers. They are waiting and watching us, depending upon our answers.

Thank you.

Chairman MILLER. Thank you. Dr. Wright.

[Prepared statement of Nancy A. Boxill, Ph.D., follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. NANCY A. BOXILL, PH.D.

Understanding the effects of homelessness on children begins with understanding the context of their lives. What follows is a summary of the daily routine of homeless children who live in shelters in metropolitan Atlanta.

The day begins when the children are awakened by their mothers between 5:00 a.m. and 5:30 a.m. in the morning. In a cavernous, yet crowded gym, the children must help their mothers disassemble their beddings (mats and covers), all of it, store their bedding, get dressed, pack their belongings and hope to receive a cold snack. By 6:30 a.m. they *must* leave the shelter, taking all of their belongings with them. Preschool children accompanied by their mothers take public transportation to the children's shelter across town. Once there, they wait in the parking lot in line hoping to get a place inside. The shelter serves only thirty (30) children, and admittance is on a first-come first-served basis. The thirty (30) children at the front of the line spend the rest of their day at the shelter. Their mothers may not stay with them. There is simply no room. Small children therefore are left in a strange place with strangers. They are safe and warm, yet away from their mothers. Those children turned away from the shelter spend their days either wandering the streets with their mothers or accompanying their mothers to job interviews, social service appointments or sitting idly in the Women's Day Shelter. Even tiny tots must help their mothers carry their belongings around town until the night shelters open at 7:00 p.m. Everything about their day is out of order and unusual. Even eating a meal is not guaranteed. (Receiving two meals a day from a shelter disqualifies the family from the Food Stamp Program). They are picked up from the day shelter and taken by public transportation to wait for the night shelter to open. These children do not engage in American life; they only observe it passing them by. They are the watchers.

School aged children leave the night shelter at 6:30 a.m. They walk to the nearest school bus stop where they wait on street corners. Knowing that they may not remain in a particular school, they often deliberately avoid social interaction and involvement in school activities. The school experience may be temporary. They hope for anonymity because they don't want to be identified as being "homeless". When the school day ends, they return to the same bus stop to watch their peers go home. They must at all cost avoid anyone knowing that they will return to a shelter. From 3:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. (when the night shelter opens), they must find a way to be safe. They wait for a turn to be an ordinary child. Occasionally, as a kindness, police vans transport the children and their mothers to shelters. (Groups of small children ride the city streets in the early morning darkness watching Atlanta through the barred windows of police vans).

About 5:30 p.m. families begin to meet at predetermined places to begin the process of finding a shelter for the night or waiting for the identified shelter to open. Finally after fourteen hours of carrying and guarding their belongings, these families can rest. In large public spaces they group themselves as families to eat unfamiliar foods prepared by volunteers. Mothers and their homeless children bathe and wash their clothes in public bathrooms—taking turns and hoping for a moment of family life. Mothers sleep with their children on mats and cots on gym floors. Children who must do homework, trying either to supervise homework assignments look for private space to be quiet and alone.

Homeless children live in public twenty-four hours a day and wait for a home. Homeless children do not find the world a wonderous joyful series of discoveries. Homeless children have neither parents nor social service persons who can serve as adult models for learning to manage the world. No adult seems to be able to put their "out-of-order" lives in order. Homeless children are the waiters and the watchers.

Among the findings in research conducted by Anita Beaty of the Atlanta Task Force For The Homeless and myself, are three defined themes which capture the experiences of the children.

1. An intense desire on the part of the children to proclaim their own self-worth in a world that says they are "out-of-order". The children resist adult attempts to clump them into the categories of deprived, poor or even pityful children. Example: Debra, an eight year old told me who she is on the inside as we shared an experience in the kitchen of the shelter following dinner. Debra entered the kitchen and watched me begin to clean up. We greeted each other with our eyes, she asked, "can I have a job to do". I was pleased to include her and suggested she gather all of the serving spoons. We exchanged small talk as we worked. When she was finished she instructed me, "give me another job"? I responded immediately by asking her to cover the leftover food. Once again upon completion she said, "Nancy, can I have another job"? I asked her then to rinse out the dish cloths. When the kitchen was clean and Debra had completed her jobs she announced that she was "all done". I praised her warmly and expressed how proud I thought her mother must be to have such a good helper in the family. Debra smiled as asked, "will you give me something for doing my job"? I was surprised. I prepared to give her a lecture on work and rewards. My thoughts came slowly and I simply said, "No, I have nothing to give you". Quite seriously, she said, "Yes, you do." My mind anticipated a request for money or more dessert. I asked, "What do I have to give"? Her eyes brightened and seemed to hide a special surprise as she said, "You can give me a hug. You can always give a hug when you have nothing else to give". Knowing Debra now from her inside and feeling embarrassed, I gave her a strong, warm hug, tearful all the while. Debra had asserted herself making explicit a genuine description of her worth in the world.

2. Kevin, age 6 asserted himself actor in the world. His behavior evidenced his strength in resisting a caption of "dependent urchin" gladly receiving charity. He entered the kitchen forcefully and clearly requested more food from a group of volunteers of a local church. With pride and manners he said, "may I have seconds, but don't give me any of that chicken. I don't like it, I want the other meat". What I heard and saw was his refusal to allow nameless adults to describe his world. I watched him feeling confident in his ability to discriminate and be known by his likes and dislikes. He was not afraid to say "no".

The many ways in which children of all ages continually found to say emphatically who they were was astounding. In an identitless circumstance, the childrens' "yeses" and "nos" took on new meaning. The children protected and expressed their self-esteem. The children acted out and verbilized their deep sense of uncertainity and ambiguity about everything.

For most of the children in the night shelter, "tomorrow" is a fuzzy ambiguous prospect. There is only the certainty of the morning routine of leaving the shelter. The remainder of the day is not assured. Among themselves the children spoke about being different from other children they had known. They had mixed feelings about the kindness of the volunteers and strangers who brought them food and clothes. They knew that they acquired the basic things of life in ways that were different than other children.

Nothing, no part of their day is predictable. They sleep in different places and spaces every night. Among strangers, they eat foods that were unfamiliar or prepared in unfamiliar ways. There is no assurance that any adult will have the capacity to, or interest in, helping them negotiate the world or bring order to daily living. They live in a gap of uncertainy.

3. Keisha, age 9 expressed profound ambivalance about her place in the world as she hung herself around my neck and back asking me how many children I had. I said none, "Oh", she said, "my mom says that people who don't have children are blessed". Not believing my ears, I said, "She's right it is a blessing to have children". With firmness she said, "No", she said people who don't have children are blessed. Her whole body asked me what I thought. I felt her question on my insides and simply hugged her, unable at that moment to assuage her uncertainty—not feeling strong enough to affirm her. Much later in the evening, before I left the

shelter, I found Keisha and told her that I was sure that meeting her was a blessing in my life.

Our findings also showed that these children are over-anxious, sad, angry, lonely, depressed, frustrated and cautious. They are at high risk to succumb to the scourges of poverty. Their behavior is reflective of and congruant with their circumstances. Their behavior is "out-of-order" because their lives are "out-of-order".

The Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless and the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, as well as other agencies and organizations are realizing that the efforts of a few cannot possibly solve a systemic problem.

The way one forms a question prescribes the answer. I have begun to call homeless children the waiters and watchers. They are waiting and watching us, dependent upon our answers.

TESTIMONY OF JAMES D. WRIGHT, PH.D., PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, NATIONAL EVALUATION, JOHNSON-PEW HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS PROGRAM, AMHERST, MA

Mr. WRIGHT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I know time is short, so I'll make this mercifully brief.

I have been asked to speak about the effects of homelessness on the physical wellbeing of children, families and youth, a topic I have been continuously researching for more than four years now.

The data that I have to present on the topic are taken from a national program that began in the Spring of 1985, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, called the National Health Care for the Homeless Program, the program that has established health care clinics for homeless and indigent people in 19 large U.S. cities.

Between program startup and the end of Calendar 1986, we had received in our shop documented information on 145,000 health care encounters with something on the order of 50,000 homeless individuals. What I'll try to do very quickly is summarize what this mass of statistical information implies about the effects of homelessness on the physical wellbeing of adults and children.

My submitted testimony contains statistical tables. I refer them to your attention. I don't have time this morning to summarize the information contained there adequately. Let me simply state the two principal conclusions in regard to adults and then say some more about the children specifically.

First, virtually every disorder that we have examined, be it heart disease, peripheral vascular disorders, hypertension, tuberculosis, or you name it, is very much more common among clients being seen in these health care clinics than among the urban adult ambulatory patient population in general.

Typically, the difference is a very wide one. The only unambiguous exceptions that we found to the pattern of homeless people being more ill than people who go to the doctor generally are for obesity, cancer and stroke. In regard to cancer and stroke, our bet at the moment is it's a mortality effect, homeless adults differentially not living to those ages in the life cycle where cancer and stroke would become health problems.

Generally speaking, the homeless adults who are known to us as family members, that is, members of homeless families, are also much more ill on virtually all indicators than the general ambulatory population, although less ill than lone homeless adults.

So the first, rather, the answer to the first question, what are the effects of being homeless on the physical wellbeing of adults, my judgment is that the effects are strong and negative, in almost all cases.

The second table appended to my submitted testimony summarizes the health data we have on 1,028 homeless children who have received care in these health clinics. Again, we have comparable data in the table for children who present in normal ambulatory pediatric practice and the kinds of problems and so on that they have, compared to those of homeless children.

Again, I don't have time to summarize in grand detail. Again, any disorder you choose to pick turns out to be very much more common among homeless children than among children in general, particularly things such as skin ailments, directly the result of environmental exposure and unsanitary living conditions; upper respiratory and ear infections, otitis media in particular, gastrointestinal problems, lice infestations, and other serious health conditions directly referable to the kinds of living circumstances that have been described here this morning.

Approximately 16 percent of the homeless children that we've seen in this program already have one or another chronic health condition. Cardiac diseases, for example, much of it congenital, among about 3 percent; anemias in about 2 percent; peripheral vascular disorders and neurological disorders, and so on. My best guess is that the rate of chronic physical disorder among these children is approximately twice that observed among ambulatory pediatric children in general.

The major conclusion that I derive from this is that homeless persons, both adults and children, suffer from most physical disorders at an astonishingly high rate. Part of the difference is undoubtedly due to the atypical demographic configuration of the homeless as compared to the domiciled population; an even larger share is a result of high rates of alcohol and drug abuse and mental illness, particularly among the adults.

On the other hand, we've undertaken other analyses to show quite clearly that all these differences remain even when these factors are controlled and that the largest share of the difference in physical wellbeing is the direct result of homelessness itself, of the extreme poverty that characterizes this population in the first instance, and secondarily, the lifestyle factors, some of which we've heard about this morning, that extreme poverty creates.

Let me conclude by saying that persons who are denied adequate shelter not only lose the roof over their heads; they also thereby become exposed to a range of risk factors that are strongly deleterious to their physical wellbeing.

Thank you.

Chairman Miller. Thank you. Ms. Fagan?

[Prepared statement of James D. Wright, Ph.D., follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JAMES D. WRIGHT, PH.D., PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, NATIONAL EVALUATION OF THE JOHNSON-PEW "HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS" PROGRAM

I have been asked to speak today about the effects of homelessness on the physical health of children, families, and youth. My expertise on this topic derives from more than four years of research on homelessness and its consequences for physical well-being. The data I present are taken from the National "Health Care for the Homeless" program, a demonstration project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Memorial Trust that has established health care clinics for homeless and indigent people in 19 large US cities.[1]

Between the start-up of the HCH program in Spring, 1985, and the end of calendar year 1986, my research shop had documented some 145,000 health care encounters with nearly 50,000 separate homeless persons, program-wide. Each of these encounters generates data on the person's health problems, social characteristics, treatments, referrals, etc. Our data, in short, represent extremely large samples of homeless persons from 19 cities all over the United States, by far the largest data set on the homeless ever assembled.

About 15% of the adult clients seen in the HCH clinics are known to us as members of homeless families (vs. lone individuals); we can compare these clients with other homeless adults to show the effects of homelessness on the physical health of homeless adult family members. Likewise, about a tenth of all clients have been children ages 15 and less, so we can also examine the effects of homelessness on the physical well-being of this group. In both cases, we can also compare the rates of occurrence of various diseases and disorders among these homeless clients to the rates observed among US ambulatory patients in general, using information from the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey.[2] All these comparisons are shown in the attached tables.

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[1] The 19 participating cities are. Albuquerque, Baltimore, Birmingham, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Nashville, Newark, New York City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC.

Table One shows the basic data for adults. The table contains an immense amount of detailed empirical information, much more than I can adequately summarize in the time available. Let me simply state the two principal conclusions that these data sustain, and illustrate with a few examples:

(1) Virtually every disorder shown in the table is more common among HCH clients than among the urban adult ambulatory patient population in general, usually by a very wide margin. The only three unambiguous exceptions to this pattern are for obesity, cancer, and stroke. Whatever disease one chooses to focus on, in short, the rate of occurrence is higher among the homeless than among the population in general.

(2) Homeless adult family members are also much more ill on virtually all indicators than the general ambulatory population: that said, in most cases,

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[2] The National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS) survey was conducted in 1979. Data for the survey were supplied by a national probability sample of ambulatory care physicians (N = 3,023). For each (or in large practices, for a systematic probability sample) of the ambulatory patients seen in a randomly stipulated week, the physicians filled out a short questionnaire giving limited background information and an account of principal health problems. Data for 46,351 ambulatory care patients were generated; the attached tables are restricted to adult patients living in the large urban areas (N = 28,878). These data are roughly comparable to the HCH data in two important senses: (1) Both data sets describe clinical populations, that is, persons presenting at ambulatory clinics for attention to their health conditions. And (2) the medical information contained in both data sets has been provided by health care professionals (that is, has not been obtained by self-reports).

they are less ill than homeless adults in general.

The most common acute ailments that afflict homeless people are minor upper respiratory infections (33%), followed by traumas (23%) and minor skin ailments (14%). Lacerations and wounds are the most common of the traumas (9%), followed by sprains (7%), bruises (6%), and fractures (4%). Infestations (mainly scabies and lice) and more serious skin ailments are also very common (4 - 5% in both cases). Nutritional deficiencies (mainly malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies) are observed in about 2% of the clients (vs. 0.1% of the NAMCS patients). All these health problems are very much more widespread among HCH clients than among NAMCS patients and are almost certainly referrable to environmental exposure and related inherent aspects of a homeless existence. As regards chronic disorders, 31% of all adult HCH clients have at least one chronic physical disorder; among clients seen more than once, the figure is 41%; and among NAMCS patients, only 25%. The principal chronic disorders, in descending order of frequency, are: hypertension (14%), gastro-intestinal ailments (14%), peripheral vascular disease (13%), problems with dentition (9%), neurological disorders (8%), eye disorders (8%), cardiac disease (7%), genito-urinary problems (7%), musculoskeletal ailments (6%), ear disorders (5%), and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (5%). In most cases, the HCH rate exceeds the NAMCS rate, usually by a substantial margin.

The direct effects of homelessness on physical well being are perhaps best illustrated by peripheral vascular disease, which could well be considered the characteristic chronic physical disorder associated with a homeless existence. The category contains a wide range of disorders that share a common origin, namely, venous or arterial deficiencies in the extremities. Among ambulatory patients in general, 0.9% present for treatment of this painful and serious disorder; among homeless clients being seen in HCH clinics, the figure is 13.1%. Compared to the NAMCS data, peripheral vascular disease is some ten to fifteen times more prevalent among homeless adults than among the adult population at large.

Table Two summarizes health data for the 1,028 homeless children who have been seen in the HCH projects more than once, separately for boys and girls.[3] Comparative data from the NAMCS are again presented. By far the most common disorders observed among the children are minor upper respiratory infections (approximately 40%), followed by minor skin ailments (approximately 20%), then ear disorders (mostly otitis media, at about 18%), then gastrointestinal problems (15%), and then trauma (about 10%), eye disorders (8%), and lice infestations (7%). In all these cases, differences between homeless boys and girls are minor; differences between homeless children and children in general, in contrast, are dramatic.

About 16% of the homeless children already have one or another chronic health condition: cardiac diseases (3%), anemia (2%), peripheral vascular disorders (2%), neurological disorders (2 - 3%), and so on. The rate of chronic physical disorder among the homeless children is nearly twice that observed among ambulatory children in general. As among homeless adults, homeless children are more ill, and often much more ill, than domiciled children are.

The major conclusion to be derived from the foregoing is that the homeless, both adults and children, suffer from most physical disorders at an exceptionally high rate. Some share of the effect is no doubt due to the atypical demographic configuration of the homeless (compared to the domiciled population); an even larger share must be ascribed to the high rates of alcohol and drug abuse (and mental illness). Other analyses that we have undertaken show, however, that the largest share of these differences is the result of homelessness itself: of the extreme poverty that characterizes this population first and foremost, and secondarily to lifestyle factors that extreme poverty creates. Persons denied adequate shelter, in short, not only lose the roof over their heads. They are also thereby exposed to a range of risk factors that are dangerous to their health.

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[3] In general, our health data on clients seen once and only once is demonstrably not reliable; we therefore focus in the discussion on the patterns observed among clients seen more than once.

Life without adequate shelter is extremely corrosive of physical well being. Minor health problems that most people would solve with a palliative from their home medicine cabinet become much more serious for people with no access to a medicine cabinet. Ailments that are routinely cured with a day or two at home in bed can become major health problems if one has neither home nor bed. One of the healthiest things Americans do every day is take a shower, a simple act of hygiene that is, perforce, largely denied to the homeless population.

The major features of a homeless existence that impact directly on physical well-being are an uncertain and often inadequate diet and sleeping location, limited or non-existent facilities for daily hygiene, exposure to the elements, direct and constant exposure to the social environment of the streets, communal sleeping and bathing facilities (for those fortunate enough to avail themselves of shelter), unwillingness or inability to follow medical regimens or to seek health care, extended periods spent on one's feet, an absence of family ties or other social support networks to draw upon in times of illness, extreme poverty (and the consequent absence of health insurance), high rates of mental illness and substance abuse, and a host of related factors. Further complicating treatment, "patient compliance as a whole is poor, follow-up difficult, and the living conditions to which they return detrimental to good health."[4] In general, there is scarcely any aspect of a homeless existence that does not in some way imperil a person's physical health or at least complicate the delivery of adequate health care. Among the many good reasons to "do something" about homelessness is thus that homelessness makes people ill; in the extreme case, it is a fatal condition.

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[4] K. McBride and R. Mulcare, "Peripheral vascular disease among the homeless." Ch. 9 (pp. 121 - 129) in P. W. Brickner et al. (eds), Health Care of Homeless People (New York, Spinger, 1985), p. 122.

TABLE ONE
Rates of Occurence of Selected Physical Disorders in the HCH Client Population and in the National Ambulatory Care Survey

(N - 16 Cities, Adult Clients Only)

		Adults Seen More Than Once						
		All HCH Adults			Family Members			
	All Adults	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	NAMCS
(N -)	23745	11886	8329	3468	1417	502	915	28878
ACUTE PHYSICAL DISORDERS								
Percent Diagnosed With:								
INF	3.3	4.9	4.8	4.8	3.6	2.2	4.4	0.1
NUTDEF	1.2	1.9	1.7	2.4	2.3	2.0	2.5	0.1
OBESE	1.5	2.3	1.4	4.5	3.0	1.2	3.9	2.7
MINURI	23.6	33.2	33.4	32.8	30.6	27.7	32.2	6.7
SERURI	2.2	3.4	3.9	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6	1.0
MINSKIN	9.8	13.9	14.1	13.5	12.1	11.4	12.6	5.0
SERSKIN	2.7	4.2	4.6	3.4	2.7	4.2	1.9	0.9
TRAUMA								
ANY	NA	23.4	26.3	16.7	17.4	23.9	13.8	NA
FX	3.1	4.5	5.4	2.5	2.6	4.2	1.7	2.2
SPR	5.1	7.1	7.6	5.9	6.6	9.4	5.1	3.1
BRU	4.0	5.6	5.7	5.3	4.0	3.8	4.2	1.0
LAC	6.3	8.6	10.5	4.3	4.7	8.8	2.4	1.2
ABR	1.5	2.2	2.6	1.3	1.3	1.4	1.3	0.4
BURN	0.8	1.1	1.2	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.2
CHRONIC PHYSICAL DISORDERS								
ANYCHRO	31.0	41.0	42.8	36.8	32.6	36.1	30.7	24.9
CANC	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.2	0.4	3.5
ENDO	1.4	2.2	1.5	3.8	2.8	1.0	3.7	1.6
DIAB	1.8	2.4	2.2	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7
ANEMIA	1.3	2.2	1.7	3.5	2.3	1.2	2.8	0.9
NEURO	5.6	8.3	7.7	9.9	8.8	6.4	10.1	1.8
SEIZ	2.8	3.6	3.9	2.9	3.2	4.8	2.4	0.1
EYE	5.0	7.5	7.7	7.2	7.3	9.0	6.4	5.5
EAR	3.4	5.1	4.7	6.0	5.8	4.8	6.3	1.6
CARDIAC	4.4	6.6	6.9	5.7	5.7	8.2	4.4	6.2
HTN	10.4	14.2	15.7	10.8	9.7	12.0	8.5	8.0

CVA	0.1	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2	---	0.7
COPD	3.2	4.7	4.8	4.4	3.7	4.0	3.6	3.2
GI	9.2	13.9	13.2	15.5	15.2	16.7	14.3	5.6
TEETH	7.0	9.3	9.7	8.6	10.2	11.8	9.3	0.3
LIVER	0.9	1.3	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.2	0.9	0.3
GENURI	4.1	6.6	4.2	12.4	8.5	1.8	12.2	2.9
MALEGU	1.3	1.9	1.9	----	1.2	1.2	---	3.2
FEMGU	11.3	15.8	---	15.8	16.5	---	16.5	7.3
PREG	9.9	11.4	---	11.4	16.0	---	16.0	0.5
PVD	9.1	13.1	14.0	11.1	7.6	10.8	5.8	0.9
ARTHR	2.7	4.2	4.1	4.3	3.5	2.0	4.3	3.7
OTHMS	3.9	6.0	6.3	5.3	4.7	6.2	3.9	5.8
INFECTIOUS AND COMMUNICABLE DISORDERS								
AIDS/ ARC	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.2	---	NA
Tuberculosis								
TB	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.1
PROTB	2.5	4.5	5.4	2.5	2.6	3.4	2.2	NA
ANYTB	2.7	4.9	5.8	2.7	2.7	3.6	2.2	NA
Sexually Transmitted Diseases								
VDUNS	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6
SYPH	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	---	---	---	0.1
GONN	0.5	0.8	0.6	1.3	1.1	0.8	1.3	0.1
ANYSTD	NA	1.6	1.4	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.6	NA
INFPAR	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	1.0	1.6	0.7	0.7

Notes:

(1) Columns

The first column of numbers shows data for all HCH adult clients ever seen (N = 16 cities), regardless of number of contacts.

The next six columns of numbers show data for adult clients seen more than once (N = 16 cities), first for all adults regardless of family status, then by gender, then for adult family members, also by gender.

The last (rightmost) column of numbers shows corresponding data for adult respondents in urban areas from the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey.

(2) Rows

The top row in each table gives sample sizes for each relevant group. Acronyms used to define the remaining row entries are defined as follows:

Acute Disorders

INF	Infestational ailments (e.g., pediculosis, scabies, worms)
NUTDEF	Nutritional deficiencies (e.g., malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies)
OBESE	Obesity
MINURI	Minor upper respiratory infections (common colds and related symptoms)
SERURI	Serious upper respiratory infections (e.g., pneumonia, influenza, pleurisy)
MINSKIN	Minor skin ailments (e.g., sunburn, contact dermatitis, psoriasis, corns and callouses)
SERSKIN	Serious skin disorders (e. g., carbuncles, cellulitis, impetigo, abscesses)
TRAUMA	Injuries
ANY	Any trauma
FX	Fractures
SPR	Sprains and strains
BRU	Bruises, contusions
LAC	Lacerations, wounds
ABR	Superficial abrasions
BURN	Burns of all severities

Chronic Disorders

ANYCHRO	Any chronic physical disorder as defined in text, note 31.
CANC	Cancer, any site
ENDO	Endocrinological disorders (e.g., goiter, thyroid and pancreas disease)
DIAB	Diabetes mellitus
ANEMIA	Anemia and related disorders of the blood
NEURO	Neurological disorders, not including seizures (e.g., Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, migraine headaches, neuritis, neuropathies)
SEIZ	Seizure disorders (including epilepsy)
EYE	Disorders of the eyes (e.g., cataracts, glaucoma, decreased vision)
EAR	Disorders of the ears (e.g., otitis, deafness, cerumen impaction)
CARDIAC	Heart and circulatory disorders, not including hypertension and cerebro-vascular accidents
HTN	Hypertension
CVA	Cerebro-vascular accidents/stroke
COPD	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
GI	Gastro-intestinal disorders (e.g., ulcers, gastritis, hernias)
TEETH	Dentition problems (predominantly caries)
LIVER	Liver diseases (e.g., cirrhosis, hepatitis, ascites, enlarged liver or spleen)
GENURI	General genito-urinary problems common to either sex (e.g., kidney, bladder problems, incontinence)
MALEGU	Genito-urinary problems found among men (e.g., penile disorders, testicular dysfunction, male infertility)

NOTE: Data on MALEGU shown in the table are for men only in all cases.

FEMGU	Genito-urinary problems found among women (e.g., ovarian dysfunction, genital prolapse, mestrual disorders)
PREG	Pregnancies

NOTE: Data on FEMGU and PREG shown in the table are for women only in all cases.

PVD	Peripheral vascular diseases
ARTHR	Arthritis and related problems
OTHMS	All musculo-skeletal disorders other than arthritis

Infectious and Communicable Disorders

AIDS/ARC	Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome, AIDS-Related Complex
TB	Active tuberculosis infection, any site
PROTB	Prophylactic anti-TB therapeutic regimen
ANYTB	Either TB or PROTB or both
VDUNS	Unspecified venereal disease, herpes
SYPH	Syphilis
GONN	Gonnorhea
ANYSTD	Either VDUNS or SYPH or GONN, or any combination
INFPAR	Infectious and parasitic diseases (e.g., septicemia, amebiasis, diptheria, tetanus)

(3) Cell Entries

Cell entries show the percentage of various subgroups within the client population who have been diagnosed with the various disorders shown in the rows. Thus, 23.6% of all adult clients ever seen (in 16 cities through the end of June 1986, N = 23,745 adult clients) have had a minor upper respiratory infection. Among adult clients (same cities and time frame) seen more than once (N = 11,886), the percentage with a minor upper respiratory infection is 33.2%; among adult family members seen more than once, the percentage is 30.6%, and so on through the tables.

NA = not available at this time.

TABLE TWO

Occurence of Selected Physical Disorders among HCH and NAMCS Children, by Gender

	HCH			NAMCS		
	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls
(N =)	1,028	532	496	6,055	3136	2,919
Per Cent Diagnosed With: [1]						
INFPAR	3.7	3.9	3.4	2.2	2.2	2.2
INF (Scabies, Lice)	7.3	6.4	8.3	0.2	0.3	0.2
NUTDEF	1.6	1.5	1.6	---	---	---
ANEMIA	2.2	1.3	3.2	1.1	1.1	1.1
NEURO	1.9	2.3	1.6	0.6	0.6	0.5
SEIZ	1.0	0.6	1.4	0.1	0.1	0.2
EYE	8.3	8.8	7.7	4.0	3.5	4.5
EAR	18.0	19.5	16.3	11.9	11.5	12.3
CARDIAC	2.8	2.8	2.8	0.5	0.5	0.5
MINURI	41.9	42.1	41.7	22.4	21.1	23.8
SERURI	2.8	4.1	1.4	2.2	2.1	2.2
GI	15.0	13.2	16.9	3.5	3.2	3.7
TEETH	4.5	5.6	3.2	0.4	0.5	0.3
PREG	---	---	3.6	---	---	---
SERSKIN	3.6	3.8	3.4	1.5	1.6	1.4
MINSKIN	19.8	18.8	21.0	5.4	4.8	6.0
PVD	1.9	2.3	1.6	0.6	0.7	0.6
ANYTRAUMA	10.2	9.6	10.3	7.0	8.5	5.4
ANYCHRO	15.4	16.5	14.1	8.8	9.2	8.2
ANYSTD	1.4	0.4	2.4	1.0	1.2	0.7

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[1] See notes, Table One, for definitions of the row labels. In this table, children are persons with known dates of birth aged 15 or less.

TESTIMONY OF TRICIA FAGAN, OUTREACH COORDINATOR, ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY, NEWARK, ACCOMPANIED BY CIRO A. SCALERA, DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY, NEWARK

Ms. **Fagan**. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce my Director, Ciro Scalera, who has joined me today. I represent the Association for Children of New Jersey. And I'll try and summarize this.

Prior to doing that, with your indulgence, I have been asked to bring testimony from another homeless family who was not able to join us because their daughter broke her leg, I just wanted to read a brief excerpt of their circumstances.

Chairman **Miller**. Sure. We'll make her whole statement part of the record. Thank you.

Ms. **Fagan**. Rebecca and Danny Ayres are a working family with three children, two boys and a little girl. About two years ago they were living in an apartment, paying $450 a month, plus utilities. The landlord increased that rent in December of 1984 to $600. When they couldn't afford the increase they moved in with her in-laws. They thought they could find another place within a short period of time, since the husband was working at a job where he got paid $10 an hour.

They went all over the entire area and the apartments were either far too expensive or most of the time landlords said: "We don't want any children." This is now a quote:

> We could only stay in my in-laws until February 1, 1986, which is a little over a year, because their landlord found out we were living with them and threatened to evict all of us. We have a car, so we lived out of it for several months. My husband works at night, so we used to go to the garage where he fixes the trucks and got washed up and warm there.
>
> Each morning I would clean the children up and send them off to school from the garage. After a few weeks, my husband's boss found out and told us we couldn't do that anymore. So we lived in our Ford Duster, all five of us, parking on a different street every night. Actually, it was just the four of us, because my husband was at work.
>
> One time, when we were looking for an apartment, we found a storefront for rent. So we pretended we were opening a business so we could live in there. It was so horrible living on the street, freezing in the car, that a storefront, just one big room, looked great to us.
>
> After a few weeks, however, the other stores around us told the owner that we were living in there, and not running a business. So he told us to leave.
>
> He was nice and wanted to let us stay, but he was afraid he would get in trouble, because we had to use the buildings for business. So once again, we were facing the streets to live like animals.
>
> I couldn't bear to let the children live in the car any more. So I did the only thing I could. I brought them to DYFS, which is the state's Division of Youth and Family Services and had them placed in foster care. It broke my heart and I felt like a terrible mother.
>
> The kids were in a shelter for children while Danny and I looked for an apartment. We continued to live in the car, until he found a little room in Elizabeth. It was so small. Just a simple bed and a sink. Nothing else. We had to go out to eat, and the rent on this stinky little room was $110 a week.
>
> We were spending so much money on our place, food, phone calls and car fare to look for apartments, that we had no money for an apartment itself. No one would rent to us anyway because they didn't want children.
>
> My kids were first in the shelter in April, 1985. In July of 1985, we were told that they would be moved to a foster home.

These people then went to a housing advocacy group that works with the homeless in Union County; and despite assistance, daily assistance, looking at 20 to 30 apartments a day, were unable to locate an apartment.

When they couldn't find a place to live, the Division took the children, put them in foster homes, splitting them up. Separate foster homes.

> My DYFS worker put them in a foster home and it was three weeks before were told where they were.
>
> I was very upset that my daughter didn't like where she was staying and DYFS controlled when I saw the kids. We could only see them on weekends. They were not allowed to sleep over because our room was too small. I hated DYFS for telling me that I could not see my own children except when they said it was okay.

They lived this way until October of 1986, at which time they did find an apartment with the help of the housing advocacy group. However, because the state department was so slow in getting the security deposit check that they had promised to this family, this family lost the apartment.

It was only when the Coalition members brought in lawyers to the state's group that they offered to pay for a real estate agent to help them find a place. The family was finally reunified in January of 1987.

> I can't believe how long I was homeless. I always thought homeless people were also alcoholics and drug addicts and it was their own fault. There isn't enough housing that will take kids, and it's way too expensive for most people anyway. You have to be rich if you want a place to live. I wish I could be with you in person to express myself, but my daughter broke her leg and I have to take care of her.
>
> Just one more thing. When I first got my apartment, we only had mattresses for the boys, so the Department wouldn't let the kids come home until they had beds. It seems like every time I turned around there was another reason for them not to come home. Homelessness is a very serious problem and something needs to be done about all the homeless families who have no place to go, because housing is too expensive and nobody wants kids.
>
> I am lucky to be white, so the prejudice issue doesn't affect me. I couldn't believe all the homeless families and how many worked that I met at the Coalition. Now I really appreciate how it feels to be homeless, so I will be more sensitive. But I just want to say, as someone who experienced it, nothing is worse than being homeless.
>
> Many times I wished I was dead. The only thing that kept me going was my children. I wanted them back very badly.

I'm going to try and summarize here. I don't think that there is any need at this point to spell out for anybody here how serious the homeless situation is for families. In New Jersey, 50 percent of the people who are homeless are children, and that's of 25 to 30 thousand people a year.

Our concern today is addressing the fact that far too many of the families that are homeless in our state and around the nation are families who are dependent on state and federal systems already in place, and that those systems are failing those families.

This past year in New Jersey between 900 and 1,200 children were living in foster homes because their families couldn't find a place to live. This represents almost 18 percent of the children in New Jersey who were in foster care.

Even more appalling is the fact that in a study looking at reasons for placement, homelessness was the first or second reason exacerbating why children were placed in foster care. That's 40.4 percent of those children.

We have to ask, why are these families being separated, with the children often being placed in different foster homes, not even together, when state plans that are required under Titles IV-E and by reference, IV-B, in the National Social Security Act, demand that states must demonstrate that reasonable efforts are made to preserve, to prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from his or her home, prior to placement in foster care?

Surely it's reasonable to assist an otherwise healthy family unit to stay together when the only difficulty facing them is a lack of decent housing.

Now, courts have begun to consider this matter, and I've cited a couple of cases. I'm including a matter right here in Washington, D.C., where the courts themselves are finding support for relief for families under the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Acts which amended the Social Security Act. However, important as the court efforts have been, we feel that more needs to be done. We feel it's limited in the impact. And we think the Act as currently written needs to be reviewed and strengthened if inappropriate and unnecessary foster care placements due only to lack of basic needs are to be prevented.

These laws, we believe, were written to guarantee protection for children who were in danger of being abused or grossly neglected by their families. This is what happened at that time. However, what we're seeing now is that more and more families are being separated throughout the country not due to parental actions against their children, but due to the fact that social, economic and political factors beyond their control have created a situation in which these families are unable to provide basic needs.

I think that the McMullans demonstrated that clearly this morning.

We feel that it's not only inappropriate, but injurious to families and that the federal law has to be changed to provide a comparable guarantee of family protection and preservation at the beginning of the system.

Strong and specific language prohibiting placement under these circumstances should be added in relevant sections of Titles IV-B and IV-E and require, instead, that a core set of services be identified which a state must provide and exhaust before a child can be placed out of home.

Chairman MILLER. I'm sorry. I didn't hear the last?

Ms. FAGAN. That the states must provide and exhaust, must search for those remedies, before a child can be placed out of home.

We recognize that there are other federal programs in place which are designed to assist families with their basic needs and we also recognize that there are limits to the child welfare programs, themselves. However, there exist in those programs right now, particularly in Title IV-E, both policies (such as the allowance of voluntary placements) and fiscal incentives (for example, federal reimbursement for foster care), which too readily allow children from these families that I'm speaking of to enter into foster care.

I'd also like to briefly talk about the AFDC or Title IV-A program, because that is the program which at this time is the basic support system for the neediest families in the country.

In New Jersey we've got over 250,000 children and women on AFDC. The current maximum AFDC grant in our state constitutes only 68 percent of the federal government's poverty level. A single mother with three children receives a monthly grant of $465, with which she has to feed, shelter, clothe and otherwise care for her children. According to HUD's own estimates, the average fair market rent in our state for a family of that size is $616. For decent housing alone, that mother would have to spend 132 percent of her grant. I have a chart attached which compares costs of current AFDC having the grant, how much it costs to shelter families in shelters, and how much it's costing the State to split up a family and put the children in foster care.

The serious inadequacy of the current AFDC grant is obvious. Families who depend on these benefits are unable to afford even the most basic necessities they require, and New Jersey is a state that does fairly well by their standard of need. However, the price of consumer goods in New Jersey has increased by more than 175 percent since 1971, and our benefits have increased only 48.5 percent in that time.

The real consequence of this blatant neglect, and I do consider it blatant neglect, is reflected among the members of homeless families who are dependent on AFDC. At least 60 percent of the people who are suffering homelessness in the state are receiving public assistance and have been found by our own Department of Community Affairs to become homeless due only to a chronic inability to meet their basic living expenses. The Governors' Task Force on the Homeless' 1985 report took this recognition even farther by saying that the current AFDC levels were so grossly inadequate that they actually contributed to homelessness.

Those AFDC families lucky enough to locate housing they can afford generally are required to spend a disproportionately large percentage of their small incomes to live in what is often substandard and inhumane housing. ACNJ did a study of Head Start families in Newark. We found that those families spent an average of 52 percent of their income on rent. We're talking about an income that most of us could not subsist on. A third of those families had heat only some of the time in their buildings. Sixty-one percent had rats in their buildings. Almost one-half had constant hazardous conditions such as lead paint, leaking ceilings, et cetera.

Under Title IV–A there is also some provision allowing for a safety net of sorts through the emergency assistance (EA) program. We have some serious problems with these programs and how they're being interpreted in the states across the country.

In 1985 in New Jersey, despite the steady increase in homeless families and the interconnected increase in children placed in foster care, due to homelessness, less than 1 percent, only .52 percent of New Jersey's AFDC recipients, received any emergency assistance. This was due primarily to the fact that there is a very narrow interpretation of a fault provision. I think this has been addressed a little bit throughout this hearing. This provision found that families could receive assistance only in extraordinary circumstances, in circumstances that meant they had to be homeless to begin with, over which they had no opportunity to plan.

The state specifically ordered that availability of or existence of suitable shelter was not to be taken into consideration.

We have a very serious housing shortage in New Jersey, and I know this is true, again, across the country. This interpretation had the real effect of disqualifying the vast majority of homeless families in our state. Most families in New Jersey who are homeless are homeless because of eviction due to inability to pay rent or because their landlords found out that they're doubled and tripled up with their relatives.

Another issue in emergency assistance is duration limits. Currently I believe the federal government has acknowledged only 90 days. In some private shelters we found that families are requiring a minimum of four to five months before they can find housing they can afford. These are families that are working families as well as families on AFDC.

We've actually heard that in other states they are using emergency assistance moneys to subsidize foster care.

Chairman **MILLER**. Let me ask you if you can just stop there, because I'd like to leave time for questions. All of your testimony raises questions. I'm sorry about cutting you off.

[Prepared statement of Ciro Scalera and Tricia Fagan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CIRO A. SCALERA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AND TRICIA FAGAN, OUTREACH COORDINATOR, ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY

Mr. Chairman, Members, thank you for this opportunity to present testimony regarding homelessness among families and children. We are here today representing the Association for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ). As statewide advocates for New Jersey's children we have been concerned about and involved in addressing both the problems facing homeless families, themselves, and the factors leading to their homelessness.

In New Jersey it is estimated that 25,000-30,000 people are homeless each year. More than 50% of these pecple are children. Close to 90% of the households served by New Jersey's Homelessness Prevention Program are families with childen. Approximately 56% of those households were single parent families. Welfare offices and private agencies throughout the state estimate that more than 60% of New Jersey's "new homeless" are families, usually younger families with children.

This is not, of course, a situation unique to New Jersey. Information we have received from child advocacy groups across the country, through the National Center for Youth Law, the Association of Child Advocates, and the Children's Defense Fund, indicates that the dramatic increase of homeless families and children is truly a national problem.

Nor do we believe that this is a temporary pheomena. We are seeing only the beginning of what is rapidly becoming, if it is not already, a national crisis.

This Committee has already done an excellent job in exploring and documenting some of the underlying causes leading to homelessness among families in hearings such as that held on July 18, 1983 on Supporting a Family: Providing Basic Needs. As your hearings have documented, multiple factors have forced growing numbers of our nation's families into poverty at the same time that the availability of affordable, decent low-income housing has been sharply curtailed. These are issues that must be addressed if a more permanent solution to this problem is to be found.

Today, however, we would like to focus on the more immediate needs of the homeless and imminently homeless families. Specifically, we want to address the fact that several federal and state programs, despite their stated purpose of support and preservation of families, are failing—and a disproportionate number of the homeless families we are seeing today are victims of that failure.

In particular, we would like to focus on the following portions of the Social Security Act and how they relate to homelessness among families: (1) Child Welfare Services Program (Title IV-B); (2) Foster Care and Adoption Assistance Program (Title IV-E); and (3) Aid to Families with Dependent Children (Title IV-A).

In addition, we hope to briefly address the relationship of discrimination in housing against families and the growing number of homeless families in the country.

Children placed out-of-home due to homelessness: Need for further reform of federal child welfare laws

This past year, over 1200 children in New Jersey were living in foster homes simply because their parents could not find a decent, affordable place to live. This represents almost 18% of our state's Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) foster family care caseload. Even more appalling are statistics from a 1985 DYFS study on Children Entering Foster Care: Factors Leading to Placement. Of the foster children whose records were examined, 40.4% were found to be in foster care with homelessness as the major or secondary factor leading to placement.

Further we have been contacted by more and more representatives of our county-based Child Placement Review Boards, concerned over the number of families whose children were initially placed in foster care due only to lack of housing. They report that many of these families are now coming back before the Boards for six month reviews with both parents and children now displaying emotional, psychological and behaviorial problems not evidenced earlier.

We must ask: Why are these families being separated, with children often being placed in different foster homes, when state plans required under Title IV-E (and by reference, Title IV-B) must demonstrate that "reasonable efforts" are made to "prevent or eliminate the need for removal of the child from his (her) home. . ." prior to placement in foster care? Surely it is reasonable to assist an otherwise healthy family unit to remain together when the only difficulty facing them is the lack of decent housing.

The courts have begun to consider this question and to rule favorable on this issue. For example, in the Matter of D. I., R. I. and D. I. (Superior Court of Washington, DC. Family Division), the court ordered that a family of five be provided with either suitable housing or financial resources to secure decent housing so that they could be reunited and maintained intact. The court specifically found support for this relief in the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act which amended the Social Security Act in 1980. In New Jersey a similar case on behalf of homeless families in a rural southern county is pending. We plan to join with the State's Public Advocate in arguing, again citing this Federal Act, that it is unreasonable to place children into foster care solely due to lack of decent housing.

As important as these court efforts are, we believe they are quite limited in their impact. We believe that the Act, as currently written, needs to be reviewed and strengthened if inappropriate and unnecessary foster care placements, due only to lack of suitable housing or other basic needs, are to be prevented.

These laws are written to guarantee protection for children suffering from parental abuse or neglect, ensuring that suitable out-of-home placement will be available when appropriate. In New Jersey and throughout the nation, however, more and more families are being separated under this law due not to parental abuse or neglect, but to social, economic and political factors *beyond their control* which prevent parents from providing their family's basic needs. We believe that this is not only inappropriate, but injurious to those families. Federal law must be changed to provide a comparable guarantee of family preservation at the front end of this system.

Strong and specific language prohibiting placement under these circumstances should be added in relevant sections of Titles IV-B and IV-E, and require instead that a core of services be identified which a State must provide and exhaust *before* a child can be placed out-of-home.

This was suggested by numerous commentators years ago during the regulatory review process for these laws, but was rejected by the Department of Health and Human Services. There has always been a gap between the traditional casework services offered by State child welfare programs and the concrete needs of the families concerned. This gap, in our view, has been growing as evidenced by the system's response of foster care when a family's real need is housing.

We recognize that other federal programs exist which are designed to assist families with their basic needs and other support services. We also recognize that there are limits to the child welfare programs. However, there exist in those programs (particularly in Title IV-E) both policies (such as allowance of voluntary placements) and fiscal incentives (eg., federal re-imbursement for foster care placement) which too readily allow childen from these families to enter into foster care.

So, while we will advocate below for changes to other broader based programs, we believe strongly that more stringent restrictions and more fiscally prudent capacities must be built into the more specialized child welfare services programs.

AFDC: The need for a decent living standard and more reasonable state approaches to providing emergency assistance

In New Jersey, more than 365,000 children, women and men depend on the AFDC program for their survival. The current maximum AFDC grant in the state constitutes only 68% of the conservative poverty guidelines established by the federal government. A single mother with three children receives a monthly grant of $465 with which she must shelter, feed, clothe, and otherwise care for her chidlren and herself. According to H.U.D., the average Fair Market Rent for a family of that size is

$616. For decent housing, alone, that mother would have to spend 132% of her income. (See attached chart.)

The serious inadequacy of the current AFDC grant is obvious. Families who must depend on these benefits are unable to afford even the most basic necessities they require. And although the price of consumer goods in New Jersey have increased by more than 175% since 1971, AFDC benefits have increased only 48.5% in that same period.

A very real consequence of this blatant neglect is reflected among the numbers of homeless families who are dependent on AFDC. The State's Department of Community Affairs found that ". . .at least 60% of persons who suffer homelessness, are. . . receiving public assistance (and) . . . become homeless due to a chronic inability to meet basic living expenses, including housing." The Governor's Task Force on the Homeless in their second report (1985) took this recognition even farther. They observed that current AFDC levels were so grossly inadequate that they actually contributed to homelessness.

Those AFDC families lucky enough to locate housing they can afford generally are required to spend a disproportionately large portion of their small income to live in what's often substandard, inhumane housing. In our 1985 study of Head Start families in Newark, New Jersey (Not Enough to Live On) we found that these families spent an average of 52% of their income on rent. A third of these families had heat only some of the time; 61% had rats in their buildings; and almost one-half had constant hazardous conditions such as leaking ceilings.

Under Title IV-A there is some provision allowed for offering a safety net of sorts to those families who become homeless in the emergency assistance program. This program allows for provision of cash and/or shelter assistance to homeless families on a temporary, emergency basis. Unfortunately, most States chose to interpret the provision so narrowly that very few homeless families are actually assisted through this program. In 1985, despite the steady increase in homeless families and the interconnected increase in children placed in foster care due to homelessness in New Jersey, less than 1% (only .52%) of New Jersey's AFDC recipients received any emergency assistance.

This was due, primarily, to a narrowly interpreted 'fault' provision in the State's emergency assistance regulations. Under this provision, homeless families could receive this assistance "only in extraordinary circumstances" over which they had no opportunity to plan. The State specifically ordered that availability or existence of suitable shelter was *not* to be taken into consideration.

This interpretation had the real effect of disqualifying the vast majority of homeless AFDC eligible families in the state from receiving emergency assistance. For example, any family having prior notice of eviction by reason of inability to pay rent, over crowding or any other cause was denied assistance. (The single major factor leading to homelessness among New Jersey families today is eviction.)

In a recent court case, Jeanette Maticka vs. The City of Atlantic City and State of New Jersey, Department of Human Services (Superior Court of New Jersey—Appellate Division—Decided 2/3/87) the State Public Advocate successfully challenged the validity of both the fault provision and the current 60-90 day limit on emergency assistance. In a positive ruling on behalf of the homeless families, the court observed: "Clearly the concept of emergency assistance was to provide a bridge over the abyss of temporary homelessness. On the other hand, we cannot conceive of legislative approval of a bridge which does not span the abyss but simply comes to an end in the middle of the void."

Narrow and fault-oriented interpretation by the States of the availability of emergency assistance funds appears to be unjustifiable in light of the basic intent of the provision. Taking this a step further, we have heard that other states are actually utilizing these funds to subsidize out-of-home foster care placements for the children of homeless families.

The underlying policy of the AFDC program and its emergency assistance provision is to provide for the care of dependent children in their own homes, and to maintain and strengthen family life. We believe that not only is the AFDC program failing in its intent, but that by failing to keep pace with inflation and provide a grant which allows for at least a minimum decent lifestyle, the program is actually putting those families dependent on AFDC in jeopardy. Housing costs and other economic realities as such that for many AFDC families, homelessness is now a real and imminent danger.

Until such time that meaningful welfare reform is a reality, the AFDC program remains America's fundamental support program for our neediest children. As such, Congress should require that the States adjust their standards of need and AFDC grant levels to accurately reflect reasonable living costs, and should consider requiring some type of periodic cost of living increase.

Similarly, as we reflected in our discussion of Titles IV-B and E, consideration should be given to developing stronger language which would prohibit unwarranted restrictions to entitlements currently allowed in this program (specifically emergency assistance) and provide incentives for those States which provide comprehensive services to homeless families and, more importantly, programs directed at preventing homelessness.

We hope that this Select Committee will urge the Public Assistance and Unemployment Compensation Subcommittee of the Ways and Means Committee to critically review the statutory provisions of all three of these Titles.

Discrimination in housing against families with children

Before concluding, we want to bring to your attention our great concern about the blatant discrimination that families with children are experiencing while searching for housing. Through our association with New Jersey's Right to Housing Coalition we have had the opportunity to meet with, and hear, firsthand, the true stories of numerous homeless families from throughout the State. These families have had a widely varying experiences, histories and economic situations. They have come from rural, suburban and urban communities in New Jersey. Some worked, some received AFDC, some were single parent families, some had both parents present.

The one common thread running through each family's experiences was that each of them had been denied the opportunity to rent housing, usually more than one time, simply because they had children. The National Center for Youth Law has done a particularly fine job in documenting and addressing this problem, nationwide. In New Jersey, the Housing Coalition of Middelesex County conducted a statewide survey on this issue and found that this type of discrimination is a blatant and insidiuous factor exacerbating the homeless conditions of families in the State.

We strongly support current Congressional efforts to amend the Federal Fair Housing Act to prohibit this type of discrimination.

We thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

Prepared by the Association for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) 17 Academy Street, Suite 709, Newark, NJ 07102

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	AFDC GRANT	AVERAGE STATE FAIR MARKET RENT #	SHELTER COSTS ##	FOSTER CARE PAYMENTS ###	GENERAL ASSISTANCE	FOSTER CARE & G.A. COSTS COMBINED
2 persons: parent & one child	$307	$418 (136%) *	$720 (235%)*	$227 per child	$133/parent	$360 (117%)*
3 persons: parent & 2 children	$404	$492 (122%)	$1080 (267%)	$454/ 2 children	$133/parent	$587 (145%)
4 persons: parent& 3 children	$465	$616 (132%) *	$1440 (310%)	$681/ 3 children	$133/parent	$814 (175%)

ALL COSTS REFLECT MONTHLY PAYMENTS.

* All Percentages (%) given are percentage of the AFDC grant.

# Fair Market Rents (FMR) given are a state average FMR rents for one, two and three bedroom apartments, respectively, as determined by the Federal Housing and Urban Development department (HUD).

## These are average monthly costs paid to shelter homeless families in hotel/motel rooms. Most of these rooms have no cooking facilities or other normal amenities of a home.

### Foster care payments are paid according to a two dimensional rate scale:

1.) First there are 4 levels of payment according to the needs of the children being placed. The lowest level is for children who have no special needs and the highest is for children with exceptional needs.

2.) Within each level there are rates of payment based on the age of the child being placed. For example, for children with no special needs (level I) payments for children in different age groups would be made as follows:

infant to 5 years old = $193. a month
6 to 9 years old = $205. a month
10 to 12 years old = $227. a month

The payment used on this chart ($227.) is an estimate. Though the majority of children placed in foster care due to homelessness appear to be 8 years old or younger, some do have special needs. In addition, the estimate used does not reflect the clothing allowance and additional regular foster care expenditures paid by the State.

January, 1987

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NEWSLETTER

ACNJ

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN OF NEW JERSEY 17 ACADEMY ST., SUITE 709 NEWARK, NJ 07102 201/643-3876

Homeless in the Garden State

By Tricia Fagan
ACNJ Staff Associate

There is a growing epidemic among children in New Jersey. Though usually not fatal, it often scars people for life. Children of all ages are affected, but the younger a child is, the more likely it is that she or he will be a victim. This epidemic has spread across all racial and most economic classes, although children who are black, hispanic or less affluent are disproportionately affected. As a nation we often associate this problem with the 1930's, but the fact is that this is a serious problem of the 1980's. The epidemic is homelessness.

The number of homeless and near-homeless children and families throughout New Jersey grows larger every year. Though specific data is difficult to obtain, some estimates indicate that more than 60% of the "new homeless" in New Jersey are families with children. These families are already familiar to many private and public service agencies across the state. Last year, for example, 86% of the households served by New Jersey's new Homelessness Prevention Program were families with children. Unfortunately, however, most homeless families in New Jersey do not seem to be visible enough to demand the help that they need.

Homeless families in this state are not as easily identifiable as the individuals who are traditionally associated with homelessness. Though destitute individuals will sometimes sleep in entrance-ways, parks and other public places, most homeless parents instead choose to shelter their children in whatever way possible. Abandoned buildings, cars and vans or space in one of the few family shelters in the state shelter homeless families away from the public eye. Other families illegally double and triple up in the apartments of friends and family members who could face eviction if they are discovered. More than 117,000 eviction cases were filed in New Jersey between July 1984 and May 1985.

Poverty and Homeless Families

Who are homeless families, and why don't they have a place to live in a state which has the third highest per capita income in the country? Many of them are poor. Families in New Jersey who have children under eighteen years old are four times more likely to be living in poverty than other families. The cost of housing has increased dramatically in the past twenty years. At the same time there has been an increased demand for housing in the state. Many lower income families struggling to make ends meet are simply unable to locate affordable, decent places to live. According to conventional standards, more than 3 out of 4 of New Jersey's lower income households pay more than they can afford for housing. A 1984 survey conducted by ACNJ and the Newark Pre-School Council found that Newark Headstart families spent 39% of their total income on housing, for example. Those families who rented on the free market (as opposed to those who lived in subsidized housing or who depended on alternate housing subsidy programs, such as Section 8) paid an average of 45% of their total income on housing.[1]

For those families who must depend on the current AFDC grant for income, the situation is almost impossible. As Table 1 demonstrates, based on fair market rents established by the federal government, a mother depending on AFDC would have to pay a *minimum* of 99% of her grant for decent housing in the least expensive county in the state. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) bases these rents on actual costs of renting the most *minimally* decent housing within a given metropolitan statistical area. Fair rent costs vary from county to county from a high of $468 in Bergen and Passaic for a family of two to a low of $325 for that same family in Sussex.

Discrimination Against Children

Many homeless families have been discriminated against because they have children. With the state's critically tight rental market[2], landlords have become much more discriminating in their selection of tenants, despite the fact that this type of discrimination in renting is illegal. One-parent, low-income, non-white and younger families are most likely to be affected by discrimination by landlords because they represent the largest portion of families who rent. Surveys show, however, that white and more affluent families with children are equally discriminated against due to their parental status when they attempt to rent housing.[3]

New Jersey currently has a statute prohibiting discrimination against families with children under fourteen in rental housing (N.J.S.A. 2A:42-101). This law does little, however, to prevent real discrimination against families. A landlord is fined only $200 for a first violation and a maximum of $500 for any additional violations. The victim does not receive any of this fine, must pay her or his own court fees, and has no guarantee of housing even when they win their suit. Bill S-181, re-introduced by Senator Leanna Brown (R-Morris), would prohibit all forms of discrimination in

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housing against families with children under 18.

The inequity of the housing market for parents is often compounded when a family faces racial or economic discrimination as well. While locating affordable housing for parents is difficult enough, the addition of these factors can make it almost impossible to find a place to live, even for families with a reasonable income.

Richard and Martha L., a young black couple who are life-long residents of Middlesex County, brought their two young children back to the county when Richard completed his tour of duty and left the Service in November, 1984. They stayed at a relative's home "temporarily" while looking for an apartment. Richard had a good job and hoped to find a nice home for $500-$550 a month. After 10 months of constant searching, the L. family was still unable to find housing. During that period the family came close to breaking up under the tremendous stress of losing out on advertised apartments, living day to day on the floors of family members' homes, and dealing daily with the frustrations of being homeless.

The L.'s finally approached a fair housing advocate, convinced that they were being discriminated against. The agency worked with them in testing the availability of advertised rental units. They were able to prove that the L.'s were being clearly discriminated against. It wasn't until November, 1985, however, that the L. family finally found permanent housing.

Large Families Homeless

A small but significant number of families are homeless simply because they are unable to locate an affordable home large enough to accommodate their families. Multi-bedroom housing units available for families to rent in New Jersey today are practically nonexistent. Units of this type that were formerly available have been remodeled into smaller units, renovated into condominiums, turned into student housing, allowed to deteriorate. The result is that larger families who must rent have literally nowhere to go. Most of these families have three or four children. Some families, however, are even larger.

Alison R. lives in central New Jersey where she is raising eight children. For the past several years she has rented a house for $550 a month, borrowing wherever she can to make up the difference in her $528 a month AFDC grant. The landlord, hoping to force the R. family out, has allowed the house to deteriorate into substandard conditions. Alison, being unable to locate alternate housing for her family, has had to remain despite poor living conditions. The landlord recently increased the rent to $618. It is impossible for Alison to raise that amount each month. Inevitably, she and her children will be evicted. Though she has been trying for several years to get into the federal Section 8 housing program, she has been denied due to the intense competition for the limited number of Section 8 vouchers. Within a couple of months, Alison R. and her children will be homeless.

ACNJ offered the following recommendations in testimony to New Jersey's Council on Affordable Housing on February 13, 1986.

In establishing present and prospective need formulas, developing criteria for municipal fair share, and evaluating the final plans, it is essential that this Council maintain a focus on the tremendous need for affordable family housing in this state.

For various reasons senior citizen and young adult housing is often more attractive to municipalities than housing for families with children. In addition, developers may choose to build only single bedroom units as the most simple method of meeting their low/moderate income obligations. A responsible number of multi-bedroom units must be included in Fair Housing plans in order to meet the needs of N.J. families and thereby ensure the health of the state.

The Council must ensure that non-urban municipalities do not misuse the regional contribution agreements by transferring most or all of their low/moderate income *family* obligations to urban municipalities.

The pressing need for affordable housing for families is not only an urban phenomena. While innovative, measured use of the regional contribution agreements could prove beneficial to families and municipalities alike, we urge the Council to carefully scrutinize all these agreements to ensure that those municipalities asking to transfer some of their obligation have adequately planned for the needs of their own lower and moderate income families. Employment and educational opportunities are vital to the success of young families. Further segregation of needy families must not be allowed to occur in this state. It's bad policy for families and bad policy for New Jersey's own continued growth.

There is a need to ensure that a minimum reasonable percentage of the low/moderate income housing to be developed is rental housing.

For a large portion of the lower income population, including many of the state's single parents with children, homeownership is currently an unrealistic goal. Yet thousands of previously available, affordable rental units have been lost in the past decade alone due to gentrification, development of condominium and co-op units, and deterioration. It is essential that rental units be part of any municipality's fair share plan.

We urge the Council to consider adding at least one additional public member.

This body is charged with an extremely important public responsibility, one which will have far-reaching significance for New Jersey and its citizens. Because of this we would like to see at least one other public member on this Council to represent the needs of the moderate and, perhaps more importantly at this time, low income citizens of the state.

Finally, we believe that the Council must not only set specific numbers for each municipality's fair share, but must also institute mechanisms to ensure that municipalities actually follow through on their plans in a responsible and timely manner.

Along the same line, the success of this most important endeavor will depend on meticulous monitoring of all phases of planning and actual implementation (including follow-through on any regional contribution agreements) to ensure that municipal plans are being carried out as stipulated. These issues are too important to leave to "good faith" arrangements. There must also be mechanisms established that guarantee reasonable, equitable resale and rental controls for Mt. Laurel housing.

A suit filed by Ocean-Monmouth Legal Services in Ocean County in May, 1985 on behalf of seven families, each with three or more children, is currently awaiting a hearing date. The suit, *Algor vs. County of Ocean*, tests the constitutional right to shelter of homeless families in New Jersey and asks the court to establish the responsibility of the state, county municipalities and Board of Social Services involved in providing shelter to those families. It also raises questions about the right of families to stay together whether or not they are poor. The court's final decision on this case will have important repercussions for New Jersey's homeless families.

Families Separated

Many of the state's homeless families have children in foster care. The inability of a family to afford/provide housing for their children can be interpreted by the state as neglect. Though some emergency assistance funds exist to help families in housing and other emergencies, housing continues to be

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a primary cause of out-of-home placement in this state. A 1985 report for the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) noted that homelessness and extreme housing difficulties represent the problems most frequently encountered by families whose children are placed in foster care in New Jersey (40% of families with children in placement). The State's Child Placement Review Advisory Council has also documented this correlation between lack of housing and out-of-home placement. Housing is the number one reason for children being removed from their parents, representing 19% of all CPR cases in 1984.[4]

Pat T. admits that after struggling to find housing for herself and her 5 children while camping on the floors of different friends and relatives, temporarily placing her children in foster care was almost a relief. The T. family was evicted from their urban apartment when they were unable to pay the rent increase demanded. Pat T., a white lower-income homemaker who was abandoned by her husband, hoped that she would be able to find a decent apartment quickly and bring the family back together. Several months later she is in even worse condition than before. Her children, though placed voluntarily, will not be returned to her until she finds appropriate housing according to state standards. Pat T., however, is no longer eligible to receive any AFDC or related assistance the family was formerly receiving as long as her children aren't living with her. Without that aid and faced with the limited housing options available, Pat T. is fearful she may never get her family back.

There are many parents like Pat T. throughout the state. They are faced with an almost impossible task of locating and securing housing for their family with little if any income. If not, they face losing their children permanently. Even if a parent can locate an apartment and find assistance in putting up the security deposit, she* must convince the landlord of her ability to pay the rent. DYFS and the Division of Welfare have an agreement whereby Welfare will begin processing an AFDC grant for the full amount if DYFS notifies them as to the exact day that the children are to be returned home. With this arrangement a parent should receive her full AFDC grant the day the children come home. Checks are not always available on time, however, and few landlords will rent on only the promise of a constant income. Some states, such as Massachusetts, extend AFDC assistance for several additional months to parents whose children have been temporarily placed for reasons such as housing, in order to help stabilize the family's situation. New Jersey has yet to develop a similar approach to this problem of families being separated, sometimes permanently, simply because they can't find decent, affordable housing. In the end, the state ends up paying to maintain these children, usually in separate foster homes, for months and sometimes years, while the mother searches for decent, affordable housing.

TABLE I.

Family Size	Parent 1 Child	Parent 2 Children	Parent 3 Children
Maximum AFDC Grant (per month)	$292 00	$385 00	$443 00
N.J. Average Fair Rent Cost (per month)	$394 90	$462 70	$575 10
% of Grant	(135%)	(120%)	(130%)
Fair Rent in Least Expensive County [Sussex] (per month)	$325 00	$380 00	$475 00
% of Grant	(111%)	(99%)	(107%)
Fair Rent in Most Expensive County [Bergen & Passaic] (per month)	$468 00	$543 00	$677 00
% of Grant	(160%)	(141%)	(153%)

One-Parent Families

Probably the largest and most rapidly growing number of homeless families are those headed by one parent, usually the mother. Among all the homeless families already mentioned — those who are poor, those facing discrimination, those with many children, and those who have children in foster care — the vast majority are headed by a single mother.

Between 1970 and 1980 the number of one-parent families in New Jersey increased by 250%. Today, close to 20% of the state's children live with their mothers. The major growth in the one-parent family during this period of time is a result of increases in divorce rates and numbers of parents who have never married. A report by the N.J. Department of Community Affairs[5] illustrates that one-parent families, particularly those headed by women, are especially affected by the current housing crisis. They are usually substantially poorer than two parent households, are more likely to face discrimination by landlords and credit establishments, and have more special needs in housing due to their status as sole support and parent figure in their family.

Some of these homeless single parents are women in domestic violence shelters, some are unwed teenage mothers, some are divorced suburban mothers desperate to remain near their jobs and communities. The Middlesex County Housing Coalition's survey demonstrates that one-parent families experiencing severe housing difficulties come from every socio-economic class and from suburban, rural and urban municipalities throughout the entire state. Clearly, homelessness is a problem affecting children and families in every county, and it is a problem that's growing.

ADDRESSING THE CRISIS

In the face of this crisis, what is being done for the many families and children who are already homeless? And what is being done in New Jersey to *prevent* families and children from becoming homeless in the face of the critically shrinking affordable housing market?

Federal Response:
An Abdication of Responsibility

For almost 50 years, with the adoption of the Federal Housing Act of 1937, the Federal government assumed fundamental responsibility for providing, in conjunction with state and local authorities, "...decent, safe and sanitary dwellings..." for the nation's lower income families. Since 1981, however, despite the growing number of Americans living in poverty and the escalating costs of housing[6], the Federal government has chosen to cut back (almost to the point of elimination) its funding for any type of subsidized housing. Review of the proposed federal budget for FY'87 shows that the Administration plans to continue this trend by freezing and/or totally eliminating whatever Federal programs still exist to assist people in need of low-income housing.[7]

New Jersey's poorer families in both our urban and rural areas have suffered tremendously as a result of this policy shift. There is little doubt that federal abdication of responsibility in this issue is a major factor in the growing number of homeless families. The reality is that this trend of blatant neglect on the part of our national leaders will continue for at least the next several years. It is clear that if New Jersey is to effectively address this crisis, strong State leadership in championing the right of families to shelter is required.

State Policy:
Need for Clarity and Action

State policy in New Jersey clearly recognizes the basic rights of its families to be housed, noting: "It is the longstanding policy of this state that no person should be ...deprived of shelter." (P.L. 1984, Ch 180). In its 1975 Mount Laurel I ruling the State's Supreme Court reiterated this policy, observing that "there cannot be the slightest doubt that shelter, along with food, are the *basic human needs*...It is plain without dispute that proper provision for adequate housing of all categories of

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*Almost every parent dependent on AFDC in New Jersey is a mother with children.

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people is certainly an absolute essential in promotion of general welfare." (*Mt. Laurel I*, 67 NJ 151; 1975.)

In April of 1983, concerned over the growing number of homeless people in New Jersey, Governor Kean established his Task Force on the Homeless in New Jersey. Task Force members took less than 6 months to study the situation and release their first report. In it they concluded that "...the problem of homelessness in New Jersey has reached the point where it can no longer be ignored...Government can no longer rely on stop-gap measures nor can it continue, as it has in the past, to rely on the efforts of private charities and voluntary agencies to meet the bare survival needs of New Jersey's homeless."'[1] They proposed a comprehensive series of recommendations aimed at preventing and addressing the problems of homelessness and based those recommendations on the "...urgent need for a comprehensive policy which integrates the responsibilities of State, County and local government with the appropriate function of voluntary agencies as direct service providers."'[1]

Since the report has been issued there have been some initiatives implemented by the State on behalf of the homeless. A network of Comprehensive Emergency Assistance Systems (CEAS) was established to coordinate planning and emergency services on a county level to homeless and other citizens in need. In 1984 Governor Kean signed into law Bill A-299 introduced by Assemblyman David Schwartz (D-Middlesex), appropriating $1.6 million for a Homelessness Prevention Program. This program essentially provides rental and mortgage assistance on an emergency basis. (An indication of the pressing housing need in this state is the fact that this program ran out of monies months before their first year ended.) The State also appropriated some emergency funds to provide food and shelter in FY'85 and FY'86, and increased its still inadequate AFDC and General Assistance (GA) grants for FY'85 and FY'86.

Initiatives made to date, however, have not begun to address the needs of New Jersey's homeless families and individuals, and have failed to substantially address the root causes of homelessness in New Jersey.

State Commitment Challenged

In the face of the growing numbers of homeless people, advocates are beginning to question the State's commitment to remedy what has become a statewide crisis. Legal Services, the N.J. Department of the Public Advocate and local groups such as the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless have initiated a number of civil actions around the state on behalf of homeless people. Through these cases, which include the *Algor* suit mentioned earlier, they hope to force state, county and municipal governments to establish clear, equitable policy on sheltering the homeless people in New Jersey, and to put that policy into effect.

Among the many areas of concern to those advocating for the State's homeless, there are some key issues they feel the State *must* address. One of these issues relates to the "fault" provision in the current AFDC/GA regulations. These regulations are used to determine whether a family or individual is eligible for Title IV A emergency assistance. According to this provision, an otherwise eligible AFDC family can only receive this assistance if they can prove that they are homeless through no fault of their own — that they had no opportunity to "plan in advance." A family which knows several months in advance that their rent is going to increase, is unable to find affordable housing in the interim, and is evicted for failure to pay rent, for example, is not eligible to receive emergency assistance for housing in New Jersey because of this provision, despite the fact that they are now homeless.

Another issue being challenged in the courts relates to the limit on the length of time that this emergency assistance is available to a homeless family or individual. Current regulations allow this assistance to be provided for no longer than one calendar month following the month a family loses its home. Faced with the scarcity of housing, advocates maintain that there is a clear need for this limit to be extended or lifted completely. It is almost impossible for a low-income homeless family to find decent housing on today's market within that short period of time.

ACNJ presents a day-long

South Jersey Child Advocacy Conference

at Glassboro State College
on May 15, 1986

Additional information available
through the ACNJ Office at
(201) 643-3876 or (609) 467-3211

A recent hearing in the Administrative Law Court in Newark affirms this point. Homeless individuals from an Elizabeth Shelter had been unable to locate housing. They had requested an extension of emergency assistance from the local welfare office, but had been denied because they had exceeded the current time limit. **With the help of housing advocates, they appealed to the court and welfare officials, in a pre-trial agreement, extended the emergency assistance. The stringency of these regulations is clearly illustrated by the fact that in 1984 less than one-half of 1% of the state's AFDC families received emergency assistance for any type of emergency, including food, shelter, furnishings, etc.**

Advocates are also calling for the State to provide the financial backing necessary to support its policy commitment to the homeless. A preliminary survey conducted last year by the Accountants for the Public Interest-NJ showed that it is "...thoroughly evident that New Jersey provides far less for all emergency services to the homeless ($85 per person, per year), than any neighboring state provides in funding for shelter alone." Some of our counties are without shelters for homeless families. Without adequate funding assistance from the State, private groups such as church groups and community agencies who have traditionally sheltered the State's homeless, have been unable to provide shelter for the increased numbers of people in need.

Advocates are also demanding that the State address the fact that many of the homeless families and individuals are simply unable to afford *any* housing in New Jersey due to the inadequacy of the current AFDC/GA assistance. As Table 1 illustrates, even 100% of the current AFDC grants is not enough to pay for shelter *alone*, based on real cost of living in New Jersey. Legal Services of New Jersey is currently developing a coalition of concerned citizens in order to press the State to take responsible action.

These issues and others, such as the lack of training for state and local employees who work with homeless people, the lack of coordination in planning and provision of services to the homeless and the breaking up of families, due only to lack of housing, must be addressed on a state level. There is a clear need for the state, through its Department of Human Services, to evaluate these issues and implement regulations and programs that more adequately address the real needs of homeless families.

Partnership Needed

The State, alone, cannot assume total responsibility for sheltering the homeless. Many of the suits filed on behalf of homeless people throughout the state require county and municipal governments to provide for the shelter and services required by the homeless as well. Those private groups, such as churches and the Salvation Army, who traditionally have ministered to the needs of the homeless, continue to play a major role in meeting those needs.

Community groups around the state are beginning to develop alternative living situations for lower-income families and individuals. Various options such as home-sharing, sweat equity programs, community land trusts and even urban homesteading are being developed and explored in various communities around the state.

In addition, people are beginning to come together both locally and on a county- and state-wide basis to speak up on behalf of the homeless people in the state. Groups such as the New Jersey Task Force on the Homeless, Right to Housing and the Union County Inter-faith Council on the Homeless are developing strong coalitions of citizens concerned about the growing problem of homelessness and the lack of strong initiative on the part of the State's Administration and Legislature to date. In some

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locations, such as Newark, homeless people, themselves, are joining together to demand appropriate action on the part of the state and municipality, and are asking to be given an opportunity to work on remedying their homeless state.

Leaders of many religious groups are beginning to voice their concern about the homeless situation. Members of various denominations at a local level are calling on their churches and synagogues to come forward and speak to the need for temporary shelter and for permanent housing for the homeless. Statewide groups such as the League of Women Voters, long active in advocating for low-income housing, are joining with other groups in a push for State accountability in the planning and provision of housing for our lower-income citizens.

Low-Income Housing: The Key

These advocates are aware, however, that any efforts on behalf of the homeless will be futile unless a comprehensive plan for addressing the housing needs of the state's lowest-income families is developed. The New Jersey Supreme Court's Mt. Laurel decisions represented an important first step toward developing such a plan. The new Council on Affordable Housing was developed in accordance with the Fair Housing Act of 1985, passed by the Legislature in response to the Court's Mount Laurel II decision. It will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring the implementation of municipal plans which are to include provision for the development of a fair share of low and moderate income housing. As noted by the Chairman of the Council, Arthur Kondrup, this Council and its work represent only another step towards addressing our low-income housing needs, however. ACNJ in its testimony before the Council in February, 1986, presented some recommendations which we believe will strengthen the potential positive impact this Act could have on lower-income families in the state. (The full text of these recommendations can be found elsewhere in this Newsletter.) The total effect of this Act, however, will take years and will most probably not have a substantial effect on the housing problems of the poorer families in the state. More must be done to address the real housing needs of these families.

There are community groups, many working in conjunction with state and municipal entities, who are actually developing low-income housing. These projects, however, are few and far between and are limited by lack of resources. A larger commitment of financial and technical support are necessary if non-profits are to be encouraged to take a greater role in developing and supporting these types of housing endeavors.

A TIME FOR ACTION

"All people share the basic human right to live in dignity, safety and security. Surely all of you, either as individuals or as representatives of your organization, recognize the need for that basic right for America's children. We have all seen the negative impact of disrupted and displaced families on children — in schools, in social encounters, in health situations, in emotional and mental problems. A place to call home, whether in a non-traditional setting or in the traditional mold, seems little enough to ask for in a country such as ours."[14]

It is important, as we work to address this crisis of housing and homelessness, to keep in mind that for the homeless children of this State, housing is neither a commodity nor an investment, but a home. These children need, and should have the right to, the basic human provisions of food, shelter and clothing. Federal, state and local policy must acknowledge and insure this right.

The crisis of homelessness is growing. Thousands of families are already affected, and thousands more are at risk of imminently losing their home, and in some cases, losing their children. We need to begin working *now* on addressing this problem and the corresponding lack of low-income housing.

Our federal legislators need to hear that this problem is of major concern to New Jersey citizens. Our state government must be pressed to assume an active leadership role if this problem is to be addressed comprehensively and effectively. Municipal governments need to acknowledge their responsibility in exacerbating the current situation through exclusionary zoning laws and use of regulations or restrictions that have seriously limited the development of affordable family housing. They need to begin developing ways of providing their fair share of innovative housing options for the lower-income families of their regions, as required under the Fair Housing Act of 1985.

Those local, county and statewide groups already working to address the needs of the homeless need the support and input of the child advocacy community. This is a complex, difficult problem, but it is not an impossible one. Strong leadership, a committed partnership and an informed public awareness are needed if New Jersey is to ultimately address our current epidemic of homelessness. The prescription will not be simple or easy to swallow, but it must be accepted if the health of our children, families and state is to be ensured.

1. 1980 U.S. Census
2. Shirley Geismar, "Not Enough to Live On: A Survey of Living Costs and Conditions of Head Start Families in Newark," (April, 1984)
3. A recent national study conducted by Cushing Dolbeare, of the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that New Jersey is third highest on a national Rental Crisis Index. This index represents a conservative estimate of the number of very low income renter households divided by the number of affordable rental households. Only California and Nevada have a worse problem than New Jersey.
4. Survey of rental discrimination due to parental status in New Jersey, Middlesex County Housing Coalition (1983/1984), and R.W. Maruns, et. al., "Reporting on Measuring Restrictive Rental Practices Affecting Families with Children: A National Survey." (HUD, 1980.)
5. For a more comprehensive discussion of this issue, see Stephen Eisdorfer's article "Housing New Jersey's Children . . .," *ACNJ Newsletter*, (11/83).
6. The situations of Richard and Martha L. and their children and the other families described in this article are real. Their cases have been or are being addressed by county or municipal housing advocacy organizations. Their names have been changed to protect their privacy.
7. M. Tomaszewicz, "Children Entering Foster Care: Factors Leading to Placement (Summary Report)." DYFS, (1985)
8. Child Placement Review Report, 1984. CPR Advisory Council (1984)
9. J.B. Glassman, M.L. Petitt, and D.W. Basted, "Housing for Single-Parent Families," Department of Community Affairs (1982).
10. The President's Commission on Housing of 1982 found that there were over 10 million "very low-income" renting households in the nation, over 25% of whom live in subsidized housing. The rest live in sub-standard housing and/or pay over 25% of their income for housing.
11. An excellent explanation and guide to the FY '87 federal budget related to Low Income Housing can be obtained from the Low-Income Housing Information Service, 1012 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005. A $5 donation is recommended.
12. "Report of the Governor's Task Force on the Homeless," page 2, October 7, 1983.
13. Ibid.
14. Mary Lou Petitt, keynote speech, ACNJ Housing Forum: "No Place to Call Home," December 4, 1984.

April Conference Calendar

May 14-17, 1986	Hyatt Regency New Orleans, La.	**Sexual Victimization of Children.** For professionals who work with sexually abused children and families. For further info call Conference Coordinator at (202) 745-2176.
May 28, 1986	The Holiday Inn Cherry Hill, N.J.	**The Therapeutic Network of the Sexually Abused Child: Treatment Intervention and Prevention.** For further info call (609) 962-8333.
June 7, 1986	UMDNJ Newark, N.J.	**The Adolescent Family: Teenage Parents and Their Children.** The Third Annual Combined Adolescent Medicine/Child Psychiatry Symposium. For more info call Linda Gallmon, (201) 456-4267.

FORUM

Statewide approach to aiding homeless

The Star Ledger
Dec 11, 1986

DEAR EDITOR:

Your recent editorial on the homeless citizens of New Jersey was a timely and much needed reminder about a problem that affects more people everyday. We at the Association for Children of New Jersey share your concern, particularly in light of the tremendous increase in young families with children who are becoming homeless throughout the state and who are unable to find a place to live.

Last year, for example, 86 percent of the people assisted through New Jersey's Homelessness Prevention Program were families with children. Recent estimates indicate that more than 60 percent of the "new homeless" among us today are those families. Many of these families have very low incomes and many are headed by single mothers, but growing numbers of working, two-parent families are also finding themselves without a place to live.

Homeless families in New Jersey are faced not only with a serious lack of decent, affordable housing, but also with blatant discrimination by landlords against families with children. Though technically our current laws prohibit this type of discrimination, in reality they do little to protect young families from this type of treatment. Two bills currently being considered by our Legislature, S-181 (Sen. Leanna Brown) and S-2030 (Sens. Wynona Lipman and Donald DiFrancesco) would more effectively prohibit housing discrimination against families—a much needed remedy.

We are also seeing more and more families in New Jersey being separated, often permanently, because the parents cannot find safe, affordable homes for their children. These children are placed in foster homes at great psychological cost to them and great financial cost to society. Often, despite the best efforts of the parents to reunite their families, these children remain for long periods of time in foster care.

Many homeless families with low incomes are denied emergency housing assistance in New Jersey because they have been found to be "at fault" for their homelessness. A single mother with two young children who has $307 a month to live on, for example, is denied emergency assistance from New Jersey's welfare offices if she had knowledge, in advance, that she was going to be evicted—even though there are no apartments available to her on that income and she and her children have nowhere to go. We believe the fault provision of our current welfare regulations should be removed.

Concerned people around the state are trying to respond to the crisis, but they have been limited in what they can do alone. A comprehensive, statewide approach is needed on both a policy and program level if New Jersey is to get "its own house in order . . ." We must start working together now to address this serious problem. No child, family or individual in this state should be denied a home. It is time for our state decision-makers to show compassion and leadership in dealing with this issue. We are glad that The Star-Ledger has come forward to bring this crucial matter to the public eye.

Ciro A. Scalera, Executive Director,
and Tricia Fagan, Housing Associate,
Association for Children of New Jersey,
Newark

Decision by state appeals court called 'victory for the homeless'

THE STAR-LEDGER, Wednesday, February 4, 1987

Court eases eligibility standards in major victory for the homeless

By KATHY BARRETT CARTER

In a decision hailed as a "victory for the homeless throughout New Jersey, a state appeals court yesterday eased the eligibility standards used by the Department of Human Services for determining whether a family qualifies for emergency shelter.

In a 29 page decision, the court struck down a Department of Human Services regulation disqualifying homeless families for assistance if they had prior notice they would be displaced. The court said the regulation is inconsistent with the law.

Another regulation limiting assistance to no more than 90 days was not invalidated by the three-judge panel. The court said it needed more information to assess the validity of the rule and ordered Human Services to conduct public hearings to determine the financial impact of extending the emergency assistance beyond 90 days.

The decision is expected to have broad fiscal implications throughout the state since it allows persons who previously would have been automatically declared ineligible to receive benefits. In addition, the ruling prohibits welfare offices from stopping assistance to a homeless family that would reach the 90-day cutoff until after public hearings are held. Most of these families are living in motels, according to the court decision.

Officials of the Department of Human Services yesterday said they were reviewing the decision and declined comment.

In ruling that advance notice alone was not sufficient grounds for disqualifying homeless families from receiving assistance, the court said the fact a family is told it will be evicted in 30 days because, for example, the building it is living in is being condemned, does not necessarily provide the family with a meaningful opportunity to plan in advance for the displacement.

"Considering the economic means of the family and the availability of affordable alternate housing, the period of notice is insufficient for finding substitute accommodations," the court said in a decision written by Judge Sylvia Pressler, in concurrence with Judges David Baime and John Arbey of the Appellate Division of Superior Court. Baime wrote a separate six-page concurrence.

Rather than automatically deny the family assistance, the court said, personnel at the welfare office must assess each claim for emergency assistance to ascertain whether the applicant, based on her own circumstances, in fact had the realistic capacity to plan for alternate housing when the notice [illegible] the court must [illegible]

[illegible] shelter.

[illegible] court decision is the result of a [illegible] brought by the Public Advocate on behalf of six homeless families in Atlantic City.

The Public Advocate contended the so-called fault standard and time standard used to determine if a family is eligible for emergency shelter should not be used because they are contrary to the purpose of the law, which was established to prevent families with children from being without a home.

The fault standard, as applied by Human Services, holds a family responsible for its homelessness and therefore ineligible for assistance if it does not find alternate housing in the time allotted. [illegible] the fault standard, only a family rendered homeless by a fire or [illegible] unexpected occurrence would be eligible.

The time standard places a 90-day limit on emergency assistance to homeless families. After that time they are denied assistance whether they have secured housing or not.

In striking down the fault standard, Pressler said, "We start with the self-evident proposition that a civilized society cannot tolerate the homelessness of those of its members who are too impoverished to provide shelter for themselves.

[illegible]

the [illegible] all persons, regardless of fault, are entitled to the basic human needs for shelter ... and it is the obligation of government to ensure that these needs are met."

The court said all three branches of government—the executive, legislative and judicial—have recognized the housing problems of low-income families. Pressler said over the years a series of things have been done to "ameliorate the consequences ... of a housing market in which the poor and increasingly persons of moderate income as well, cannot compete for safe, sanitary and decent shelter."

Speaking for the panel, Pressler said the court with respect to the fault standard has "no difficulty in approving" the regulation that requires those who have had an opportunity to plan alternate housing should be disqualified if they failed to do so. But she said the court found "enormously troubling" the fact that the department "equates opportunity to plan with advance warning of the crisis."

"In view of the well-understood and well-documented lack of affordable housing for the poor, we are convinced that it is ultimately unrealistic and therefore arbitrary and unreasonable for 'opportunity to plan' to be defined exclusively in terms of notice."

With regard to the time standard, Pressler said the court agrees the emergency assistance which usually means housing families in a motel room "was never intended as a long-term response to homelessness."

But she said the maximum time limit of emergency assistance ought to "provide an adequate period for the location of substitute permanent housing for the displaced families."

David G. Sciarra, the assistant deputy public advocate who argued the case for the homeless, said, "The decision is a clear victory for homeless families in New Jersey. There is no question about that. The decision makes so many very important points about the obligation of government and in particular the Department of Human Services."

But Sciarra said it only applies to homeless families. In a similar case involving a group of men left homeless when the New Brunswick shelter they were living in shut down, an appeals court rejected their claim that the fault standard should not be applied. The state Supreme Court has been asked to hear that case.

As a result of the court ruling, "They can no longer use the fault standard to deny emergency shelter to a family on the grounds that people had an opportunity to plan," Sciarra said.

He added that the 90-day time limit "is really improper" and that the public hearing ordered by the court will give Human Services an opportunity to come up with "new regulations that actually meet the needs of homeless families in this state."

"Our contention was that the regulations effectively denied homeless families shelter," Sciarra said.

Sciarra said the court ruling had already helped a family in Union County yesterday morning who, prior to the court decision, was going to be forced to move because of the 90-day cutoff.

Dorothy Donnelly, a deputy attorney general who represented the state, is no longer handling the case and the attorney handling the matter could not be reached for comment.

Thomas Cannon, a spokesman for the Attorney General's Office, said the case is being reviewed by attorneys but no decision had been made yesterday regarding whether they would ask the state's highest court to review the issue.

Also involved in the case were Joseph E. Kane, assistant county counsel who represented Atlantic County. Atlantic City was represented by Matthews H. Fewalo, city solicitor, and Melville D. Miller Jr. of Legal Services filed a friend of the court brief in the case.

Not Enough to Live On

A Survey of Living Costs and Conditions of Head Start Families in Newark

The findings detailed in this document are the results of a special project involving a collaboration of the Newark Pre-School Council, Inc. and the Association for Children of New Jersey. The project was designed solely for the purpose of gathering factual data on the cost and conditions of living situations of parents enrolled in the Newark Pre-School Council, Inc.

It was prepared through staff and financial assistance provided by the Association for Children of New Jersey.

Research Design and Writing By
Shirley Geismar, ACNJ Staff Associate

April 1984

Newark Pre-School Council, Inc.
Association for Children of New Jersey

Preface

This report documents the economic plight and squalid living conditions in which Newark's low-income children live. The statistics paint a picture of a world where the norms are chronic want, recurring periods of hunger and substandard housing. While the year in Head Start provides an oasis of educational, social and health services benefitting the entire family, it is soon over, and the realities of life lived on the economic edge again hinder the physical and social development of these pre-schoolers.

Among the implications that emerge are the following:

- While three-quarters of the Head Start families rely on the AFDC allowance, it is the smallest and most inadequate federal benefit of all, so that children spend their formative years in families facing continuous economic stress.
- Although rents on the free market claim an inordinate amount of the AFDC allowance, there is no mechanism to adjust the benefit so as to provide enough to cover other legitimate family expenses.
- Of all Head Start families, it is those renting on the private housing market which face the greatest financial difficulties, and this is compounded when they are responsible for providing their own heat.
- While very few families lack heat altogether, almost half use space heaters to augment inadequate heating, an alternative that is both hazardous and unhealthy.
- Although public health professionals have long seen the connection between rat and roach infestation and flaking paint on the one hand, and disease and lead poisoning on the other, extremely large numbers of Newark children live in neighborhoods and housing units where these conditions are commonplace and unaddressed.
- Since food is the one survival item that is flexible, it is the one which is cut, often below nutritional standards, with possible long-term negative effects upon the cognitive development of children.
- Despite the federal food stamp program, hunger is a recurring phenomenon with which these families and children cope.
- Attempts at measuring hunger may not be using correct sources when gathering statistics, since few Head Start families resort to Food Pantries during those periods when they lack food.

- Although Newark Head Start families have few complaints of Medicaid services, they often cannot afford transportation to doctors and clinics, pointing up problems in access to health care.
- Although half of the children recently cut from Medicaid had to forego medical and dental care because parents could not afford the fees, no state health program exists to help youngsters who, no longer eligible because of stringent AFDC guidelines, still fall beneath the poverty line.

Considering these problems, the Head Start families have superbly carried out their involvement in the program, showing their deep commitment to the well-being of their children. Yet the difficulties of daily living in the city are continuous, some the results of local situations and others of conditions applicable to all low-income residents in New Jersey. For although the housing conditions mentioned here may be specific to Newark, the economic conditions are not. Families and children throughout the state face the same difficulties in finding affordable housing, in meeting rental and utility costs and in satisfying survival needs on a woefully inadequate budget. Because of financial pressures they attempt to satisfy food requirements almost wholly through the food stamp allotment. In urban areas where prices are unconscionably high and selection poor,* the consequences are multiplied many times over.

Responsible citizens and government cannot in good conscience allow these conditions to exist. Our state offers great promise and opportunities to some of its children — it must offer a decent living standard to all of its children.

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*This information comes from responses to open-ended questions on the questionnaire.

Executive Summary

INCOME AND EXPENSES

A. INCOME. (10% of the Head Start population may be composed of families with income over the poverty line)

- The average income of all the families (both above and below the poverty line) is $477 a month, or $5,724 a year. With the addition of food stamps, the average income is $595 a month, or $7,140 a year.
- Three-quarters of the families rely on AFDC, and receive less than any other group — an average of $391 per month or $4,692 a year. With the addition of food stamps, income is raised to $531 or $6,372 a year; still the lowest of all.

B. EXPENSES:

1. RENT:

- 33% of income is the generally acceptable ratio of the cost of housing to income. However Head Start families overall spend an average of 52% of their income on rent (39% when the value of food stamps is added to income).
- Families in public housing pay an average of $128 or 33% of income for rent (26% with the addition of food stamps).
- Families in housing with subsidized rents pay an average of $187 or 45% of income for rent (36% with the addition of food stamps).
- Families in housing on the free market pay an average of $249 or 60% of income on rent (45% with the addition of food stamps).
- Excessive rents of 70% or more of income are paid by 31% of the renters in free market housing, 33% of those living in housing with subsidized rents but only by 6% of those living in public housing. (Percentage of declared income, not including the value of food stamps.)

2. UTILITIES:

Heat

- Residents of public housing do not pay for their heat.
- Although only 26% of the families pay their own heating bills, the average that was reported was $183 or 38% of income (31% of income when the value of food stamps is added).
- Half of the families (71) have bills over $150 and the top 25% (35) have bills from $221 to over $680. Some of these bills may be debts accumulated over periods of time and not expenses incurred over a monthly period.

Electricity

- 98% of the families have electricity; the average bill that was reported was $70 or 15% of income (12% with the addition of food stamps).
- Half of the families (266) have bills over $50; the top 15% (67) have bills of over $100.

3. FOOD:

- Families receiving food stamps pay an average of $211 a month (about $53 a week) or 37% of their income on food. This includes $157 (average food stamp allotment) plus $60, average amount added from their own pocket.
- 60% of the population with food stamps adds $50 or less each month to buy food; 75% add $78 or less.
- Families who do not receive food stamps pay an average of $253.50 a month (about $64 a week) on food. This represents 35% of their average income.

4. COMBINED EXPENSES: Food, Rent, Utilities Only. Other normal expenses such as clothing and household items are not included.

- Overall, Head Start families who pay their own heating bills pay 115% of their income which includes the value of food stamps for the expenses of food, rent and utilities. Those who do not pay for heat have expenses of 84% of their average income (including food stamps).

These expenses differ in each type of housing.

- In public housing, families pay an average of 73% of their income including the value of food stamps for these expenses. These families do not pay heating costs.
- In housing with subsidized rents, families who are responsible for heating pay an average of 115% of their income including the value of food stamps in these expenses. If they do not pay for heat, they have expenses of 84% of their average income (including food stamps).
- In housing on the free market, families responsible for heat pay an average of 119% of their income which includes the value of food stamps in these expenses. If they do not pay heating costs, they incur expenses of 88% of their average income (including the value of food stamps).

LIVING CONDITIONS

HOUSING

- 25% of the families share housing. 77% of these families state that they share to "cut the cost" of renting.
- 60% of the families live in housing on the free market and 8% live in housing with subsidized rents, where they may incur expenses larger than their income (see above).

- 32% of the families live in public housing, incurring expenses lower than their income (see above)
- 36% of the families live in housing with density figures at or over 1.00 persons per room, the "danger point" for crowding.
- 61% of all the families have rats, either always or sometimes, in their apartments. Almost 25% have rats all the time.
- Almost 90% of the families have roaches in their housing, either all or sometimes, over half have roaches in their housing all the time.
- 40% have housing with leaking roofs or ceilings.
- 47% of all the families live in housing with peeling, flaking paint. Half of the families in public housing and 63% of families in housing with subsidized rents have this problem, which is related to the existence of lead poisoning in children.

UTILITIES

- Over a third of the families in all types of housing report having heat only some of the time.
- 40% of the families in free market housing only have heat some of the time.
- 46% of the families use space heaters, with 30% of them using them always or sometimes.
- In both public housing and housing on the free market, 30% of the families report that they always or sometimes use space heaters.

FOOD

- 78% of all families, whether they receive food stamps or not, report that they often or sometimes run out of food and have no money to buy more.
- Only 20% of the families receiving food stamps report that food stamps last throughout the month.
- Almost half (47%) of the families receiving food stamps state that they last three weeks only.
- 60% of the families add modest amounts to food stamps each month — $50 or less — although an overwhelming number of the recipients (83%) report that they sometimes or often run out of food and cannot afford to buy more.
- The area of food highlights the financial difficulties of these families. 24% wrote that their biggest problem was "running out of food," "making it last the month," and "not being able to buy nutritious food."

HEALTH

- 25% of the families receiving Medicaid state that they have sometimes had a doctor or dentist request an additional payment over and above the Medicaid reimbursement.
- 30% of the families covered by Medicaid who needed orthopedic shoes for their children (prescribed by physicians) were denied reimbursement while 13% received half payment, as opposed to 45% who received Medicaid payment in full.
- Over half of the parents covered by Medicaid state that they have not heard of the Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Program (EPSDP), a special program for children in Medicaid.
- 119 families (22%) are not covered by Medicaid. A quarter of the families not now covered by Medicaid had been recipients in the past. Of these, about 50% state that they take their children less often to doctors and dentists.
- Those not receiving Medicaid coverage pay an average of $23 for each doctor's visit for their child.
- 41% of the families not receiving Medicaid report that in the past year they were kept from taking a sick child to the doctor, because they lacked money.
- Many families wrote in that they have difficulty in getting to the doctor's office, a third specifically stating that they often lack bus fare.

EMERGENCIES IN THE LAST SIX MONTHS:

- Almost half (48%) of the families have had no food near the end of the month.
- 12% have been burglarized.
- 9% have had possessions damaged or destroyed by vandals.
- 7% have been evicted because of non-payment of rent.
- 7% have waited too long to see a doctor because of cost, and their child became very sick.

PERCEPTIONS

- Almost half of the families (47%) state that things have gotten worse for them since 1980.
- Half or more indicate that they have owed money in the past three years.

Chairman **Miller**. Let me ask you, just on that point, whether it's in Atlanta or California or wherever, what do we know about in terms of the number of people who are coming into these shelters simply because they were evicted because of the inability to pay rent in their current shelter, and what was their previous shelter?

Ms. **Fagan**. I know in New Jersey it's the number one reason, eviction and unemployment or loss of a job is the second reason.

Ms. **Boxill**. I think when you're asking about the population of women with children, that would be one of the top three reasons. That population of women and children is really very different from another population.

Chairman **Miller**. Ms. Fagan, excuse me. You said the second reason would be the loss of the job.

Ms. **Fagan**. Unemployment or loss of job.

Chairman **Miller**. I assume that would contribute to the first reason.

Ms. **Fagan**. It would contribute.

Chairman **Miller**. I guess what I'm trying to determine here is with respect to the families that are the subject of this hearing, you're talking about people who at one point in time have a certain amount of stability, they have housing, they have some economic resources coming into that family, from whatever sources. Then, the economic base disappears and now we start down this slippery slope.

But there is no ability is there, for the state—and I use that, whether it's state or county, but let's just take the local jurisdiction—the State of New Jersey, beyond some limited effort at emergency shelter, and I'm not even sure, for the state to reach in and pay a portion of the rent? As the McMullan's testified, they could have paid half of their 400 and some odd dollar rent; if somebody could have picked up the other half they could have stayed in their three bedroom apartment, or to pay some share of the shortfall, or to pick up the whole rent for some period of time until you see whether or not this family can be re-employed or what have you. But instead of doing that, we require almost total devastation and then we ride to the rescue. And it sounds to me as if the rescue is getting more and more tenuous, that it's really not happening.

Mr. **Scalera**. And it's federally funded.

Ms. **Fagan**. Mr. Chairman, I do have to say that New Jersey has a homelessness prevention program, which has been operational. It has limited funding, and is actually set up to provide rent, arrearage rents or mortgage payments for families who are temporarily in need. But they run out of that money before the end of the year; every year they've run out of money.

Ms. **McChesney**. I believe New York has some provision for payment of back rents and back utilities to prevent eviction, but my understanding is the housing——

Chairman **Miller**. My understanding is it's usually allowed for one month or two months and that's pretty much it. If you fall behind and you can get current again, you can come back in later and they will help you with your utilities or something. But we have nothing where we make this part of the plan in terms of keeping this family intact, to see whether or not we can get a new job and income into that family or not. You're telling me that's the number one reason, though, that people are ending up in this situation.

Ms. McCHESNEY. Yes. I just want to stress the importance of that, because we heard from some members some of the stereotypes that—well, parents are substance abusers or people are psychiatrically disabled. That's not what the studies show. People who are psychiatrically disabled don't have enough together to keep two kids with them while living in a car. I mean, that's really tough to do that. So we are not talking about families that have major difficulties in those areas. These families are homeless because they are poor, because the economic base has fallen out from under them. Not for some of these other reasons.

Chairman MILLER. On the removal of children, Ms. Fagan, the removal of children and the use of IV-B, in each of these cases are you telling me that you're going through the court determination, or not going through the court determination?

Ms. FAGAN. A number of them are voluntary placements.

Chairman MILLER. Oh, I see. It's voluntary.

Mr. SCALERA. It's voluntary placement——

Ms. FAGAN. As Mrs. Ayres pointed out, a lot of parents are reaching a point where they're at the end of their rope and they cannot pay for a place that's reasonable for their children to stay in and after a year and a half of homelessness——

Chairman MILLER. So the problem isn't with the judicial system just saying that this is one of the bases that you don't have to go through reunification or permanency or anything, it's that it's a voluntary placement. IV-B doesn't apply.

Ms. FAGAN. Not always.

Mr. SCALERA. There is a problem, though, with the judicial review, too, because even in New Jersey, we have a Child Placement Review Act and then a judicial mechanism for the review of those 900 children in foster care. Where was the judicial scrutiny that said what reasonable efforts were exhausted prior to the placement? And basically, it's a paper process and the courts are not——

Chairman MILLER. Who represents the family and the children?

Mr. SCALERA. Well——

Chairman MILLER. Well, in California, you would have a court-appointed attorney, either from the Public Defender's office or somebody that they contract for.

Mr. SCALERA. Well, in the case of a voluntary placement, it wouldn't be a——

Chairman MILLER. I understand that. I'm trying to separate out voluntary and involuntary. When you go through the involuntary process, somebody is there to represent the family against the Social Service system, and maybe even represent the children separately.

Mr. SCALERA. Right. We do have a law guardian program for the representation of the children and they should be raising that concern. But——

Chairman MILLER. They're not?

Mr. SCALERA. We don't see the reunification statistics that would seem to prove that in fact that concern is being raised and these children are being reunited. They may argue that, but we haven't done a monitoring study of the court cases.

Chairman **Miller**. You don't know if 4(b) failed at this point. The issue is whether or not it's properly being raised by the advocates for the children and/or the families and whether or not the courts are forced to make that determination whether or not just simply inadequate income is a basis for the removal of children.

Ms. **Fagan**. And there have been court decisions, as a matter of fact there's a case pending in New Jersey, the Algor suit in Ocean County, which is raising this issue. There's been a decision in California and also one in Washington, D.C. where the courts found that reasonable efforts should include some sort of provision of basic needs.

Chairman **Miller**. So the hearing process under 4(b) in fact can be used should the court make that determination and if that's argued by the advocates for the family and the children before removal?

Mr. **Scalera**. Yes, it can be used. The administrative agency, which is really at the front end, what we're arguing in our testimony today, is that they have not put in place a meaningful set of services that would be likely to achieve a reasonable effort to prevent placement.

Chairman **Miller**. But the only test of that is if you go through the involuntary process, really. You don't get to test that in the voluntary, because you're talking about some distraught parent, and you're telling them this is the situation and they say okay, take my children. No one will ever find out whether or not there were proper services extended and proper effort used and exhausted, because that's not one of the determinations in the voluntary system.

Mr. **Scalera**. Well, in effect, though, Congressman, what's being legally argued is that——

Chairman **Miller**. It's not being argued to anybody, it's being argued to a distraught parent. That's my point. I think these people——

Mr. **Scalera**. Well, they have to interface with the social service system at some point.

Chairman **Miller**. Yes, but as long as they can keep it voluntary, they don't have to meet the burdens of proof that you do under IV-B for determinations. I believe they should go through, if the state is going to start removing these children, the state should have to meet the burdens of proof that are required under IV-B.

But that's not being done. They're circumventing it. Used to be they wanted it because they could get money. Now they want it because they can't solve the problem if they go through that system because of the burdens it places upon the state social services.

Mr. **Scalera**. Well, we hope you look at that, because they are getting around it.

Ms. **McChesney**. I also want to say that for the mothers, single mothers especially, whichever process they go through, once the child is at a home those mothers don't ever get the kid back, and they know that, because they're not going to be found to have a suitable home unless they have income. Their income has been primarily AFDC. They're not eligible for AFDC once the child is removed. It's a Catch 22. They don't ever get their child back.

Chairman MILLER. That's true of children that come from relatively stable homes, once they enter the system.

Ms. BUCY. I'd like to reiterate again that those are the young people who at the age of 12, 13, 14, end up on the streets themselves where no one has any responsibility and there are no legal records that these children even exist.

Chairman MILLER. In a hearing the committee had over the weekend, we heard a corrollary to this: at least in Los Angeles County, it appears the foster care system is in total chaos. Like hell, they're going into foster care. We just sort of give them an all night ticket on the bus or something. Because there is no evidence that the foster care system in L.A. is absorbing any new children, teenagers, whatever, whether they come from homeless families or from families who abuse them.

Ms. MCCHESNEY. I don't know what you heard over the weekend. But in spite of court orders and everything else, they're getting well over 100 cocaine withdrawal, or drug withdrawal babies a month in the L.A. County foster care system alone. The nursery is backlogged, you know, 120 days for infants. Any kid over the age of 12 is just totally ignored and there is no such thing as placement for those kids at this point. The system has just totally broken down.

Chairman MILLER. Mr. Coats?

Mr. COATS. Ms. Fagan, I'd like to get a handle on the total range of services that might be available to the homeless family situation you described in your testimony.

I understand your chart here in terms of their basic AFDC grant not covering average fair market rental in the State of New Jersey. But can you describe for me other services, whether they're cash or in kind, that might be available to this family in addition to the AFDC grant?

Ms. FAGAN. In the past——

Mr. COATS. In your particular area. Both federal, state and local.

Ms. FAGAN. In the past, there were substantially more subsidized housing units available and substantially more Section 8 vouchers available. That has been drying up. There are incredible waiting lists for housing, for affordable housing, and that is one of the major problems in New Jersey. As I mentioned, we've also got a Homelessness Prevention Program which is some state moneys, just under $3 million I think at this time, a year. Those moneys are available to families before they're homeless. Those moneys run out early every year.

Mr. COATS. Are those designated for specific use or is it just a dollar grant that you can use, say, to pay the rent and to buy food?

Ms. FAGAN. They've got a very narrow criteria of which families this is available to. It's primarily a working family that has hit on hard times, that has had an emergency, a financial emergency, for some reason. So this program, itself, does not even touch most of the poorest homeless families. And then they've also got food stamps, those types of programs.

Mr. COATS. Okay. This very real non-hypothetical family that you were talking about, it was a parent and three children, $465 a month AFDC grant. Do you know what the total of other cash and in kind assistance would be available to that family to help them meet their basic monthly needs?

Mr. SCALERA. We did compute that in our study, Not Enough To Live On.

Ms. FAGAN. Which I don't have with me.

Chairman MILLER. I wonder if you could supply that?

Ms. FAGAN. I can supply that to you.

Mr. COATS. That, I think, makes your chart more complete for us, because we have to look at the total range of services that are available to see what that differential might be to keep that family together through a homeless prevention program or increased funding for a homeless prevention program like you have in the State of New Jersey. But we really have to compare apples with apples here to meet the whole range of services, both cash and in kind services, that might be available.

And Ms. Fagan, I want to do all I can to keep families together, too. But I keep having families coming to me, people in the foster care system coming to me and saying whatever you do, you've got to maintain the ability of the system to remove kids from families because if for no other reason, the child neglect, abuse, sexual abuse that takes place, and if you go too far the other way, in the name of keeping families whole, you're destroying young people's lives. And so don't take that away from us. You're not advocating that.

Ms. FAGAN. Not at all.

We're concerned that the system as it exists was based on some underlying assumptions about the fault of the family, which was true, and that's what it is really intended for, and we believe it's a very important and vital protection for children. However, we feel that the trend over the past five years has been that increasing numbers of families are in poverty with less support system, and that it's inappropriate for those families to be broken up and be entering into this system and being punished for reasons beyond their control. Those children are not being damaged by their parents, and they're not in danger from their parents. They're in danger from their society.

Mr. COATS. Well, I think we recognize that there are two classes at least, and some fall into each category.

I think it would be instructive for the committee, Mr. Chairman, if each of these witnesses here, to the extent that they're able, could supply us with information reflective of your area or any other information you might have, that lists what those support systems, as Ms. Fagan just said, were five years ago and what they are today, so we could get a handle on where we're going here, what services are available, and so forth.

I don't want to ask you to do more than you're able to do, and I'm not asking you to do something you can't come up with. But if that information is available, as I guess some of you are nodding your heads it is, it would be helpful for us to look at that.

Chairman MILLER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. COATS. I'll be happy to yield.

Chairman MILLER. On that point too, I think, you know, we passed an emergency homeless bill a couple of weeks ago. But my understanding is that there will be a second piece of legislation coming along that's supposed to be somewhat more comprehensive.

I would really appreciate the extent that you could stay in touch either with myself or Mr. Coats. If you get a chance to look at that, I'm sure somebody in your state, your associations, are looking at that. Because we would be very remiss if we didn't start to take a look at that in the sense that if we're just going to add money on to the system, that we make sure that it doesn't discriminate or damage families. I know it's hard, because we immediately want to say, no money shall be used to discriminate against families, but we also know that is almost the same rigidity in the system in one aspect that we're upset about here this morning.

But in the next couple of weeks, if you can sit down and think about how we put a little bit of flexibility in this system so that families can be looked at as individual families rather than categories. Because I think one of the things that all of you are aware of, and I hope most members of Congress are, when you talk about human services, nothing works, because we have to look in each one of the faces and say what's going to work for this person. And once you start to do that it gets very expensive and most people lose the stomach for it. But in this one, clearly, at least we've got to look and say what is it that will help us to keep intact families intact—whether that's a single parent and their child or the McMullans who were here this morning, or a father and his children, it makes little difference. However it comes out.

But how do we try to ensure the survivability of that unit within what is apparently a rather inhumane system at best, and that's not a reflection of people working in the system. And if some of the forecasts that we see are accurate, it's only going to get worse.

Eventually, we will have to get to part of the core problem, and that is that Congress should not be shocked by the advent of the homeless, because in one fashion or another, we all participate in the conspiracy here. I read we cut Section 8 housing by 89.7 percent from 1981 to today and other public housing programs were cut by 95.9 percent. One of the things that will make you homeless is the lack of a home. I know in the area I represent, for the nature of the county, we had a fairly extensive stock of low income housing. It's virtually disappeared. It became a shopping center, it became an office building, it became a lot of things which we want in our communities. But in that same community, as I said in my opening statement, there may be 10,000 homeless individuals in one of the highest income counties in California.

So clearly, that is going to have to be addressed. Hopefully, it will not be addressed as it was in the past when we started building 35-story high rises to shelter low income people. But it's going to have to be addressed or we're going to have to assume that this is a permanent fixture of the American streets, that we will be like New Delhi or Calcutta, we will simply assume that these people will live there and that's how it will happen.

I don't think that's acceptable. Obviously, you don't. So we need your help, to see if we can stop some of the downward spiral of people who probably never in their life thought this was going to happen to them, but for a range of experiences, it did.

There may be some people who choose to live on the streets. That's all well and good and we probably don't have to spend a great deal of energy. But there are an awful lot of people who haven't chosen, but are. And I think we do have to spend some energy.

So if you could think about it—I don't expect to make you the adjunct staff of this committee, but it would be helpful to us because we're about to take one more of these great plunges in the Congress where we're going to address this problem. And the recurring headache is that you wake up and you find out that you missed the mark. And the problem is still there.

To that extent, I would really appreciate if you could contact Jill or other staff——

Ms. FAGAN. Congressman, could I just——

Chairman MILLER. Yes.

Ms. FAGAN [continuing]. One part I missed in the testimony that I think is telling—not since 1969 has Congress requested that the states review and update their standard of needs and their benefit levels for people dependent on Welfare. There's have been substantial inflationary periods between that time and now.

Chairman MILLER. Well, I'm sure, as one who has struggled here for some time, you'll come to the conclusions we all have. Poor people are poor because they don't have any resources. Now, the question is where the resources are going to come from.

And—oh, enough said. Hopefully, we have worked out of a cycle in this country where we as politicians, were very fond of saying that nothing works. We're now moving into a cycle where at least we're researching those areas that do have some positive impact in all of these social service deliveries and hopefully will be more willing in the future than in the past to fund those that do work. We also better be prepared to confront the fact that it is very expensive to get the kind of results that we like to go home and talk about.

Ms. BOXILL. But I think if you phrase the question, though, in terms of, and that's what I meant when I was talking about forming the question, it's not always a matter of raising an income support program, the level of money that you out into that program. And if you look at it, if you decide you want to look at it at the problem in a systemic way, then you've opened up your vista for addressing the problem.

Now, you've opened up the vista of day care, which enables someone to go to work. Or you've opened up the vista of comparable worth, or you've opened up the vista of urban renewable or gentrification of neighborhoods or low cost housing.

So it really does very much depend on how you wish to phrase the question.

Chairman MILLER. The purpose of this committee is supposedly to allow members to expand some of our horizons.

I think you're right. Eventually we have to come to the recognition the problems here are very fundamental.

Thank you very much for your help and your time with the Committee.

[Whereupon, at 12:35 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

[Material submitted for inclusion in the record follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RUTH A. BRANDWEIN, PH.D., M.S.W., DEAN, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE, STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT STONY BROOK

Thank you for inviting me to submit this written statement for the record following your hearing on "The Crisis in Homelessness: Effects on Children and Families." I appreciate this opportunity to share with you some of the experiences in family homelessness in Suffolk County, a suburban and rural county on Eastern Long Island.

Since 1984 the School of Social Welfare of the State University of New York at Stony Brook, at the invitation of the Suffolk County Department of Social Services, has operated student units in selected motels where the Department has housed homeless families in need of emergency housing. The Department, which has the legal responsibility for providing emergency housing to any one in the county, uses seven shelters administered by non-profit agencies, as well as twelve motels with a capacity of 225 rooms.

While the motels in Suffolk County do not present the same horrendous conditions as the welfare hotels reported on in New York City, the conditions are anything but positive for families. These motels are the kind often used for afternoon trysts. There are no telephones in the rooms and no daily housekeeping services. Families are crowded in one room (a family with up to four members is generally housed in one room; for larger families, depending on the number, age and sex of the children, additional rooms will be rented). There are no playgrounds for the children. Few have kitchen facilities (the shelters provide either food or cooking privileges but only two of the twelve motels allow any cooking on the premises). They have only a television to occupy their time. Families are isolated from friends and family with no car or access to public transportation. The children are exposed to other motel residents who may be transients, prostitutes or substance abusers.

HEALTH

A primary health problem in motels used to house homeless families is the lack of cooking facilites. One case record dramatically illustrates this problem:

> Ms. C. has five children. She is pregnant. She speaks no English, having recently arrived in this country from Puerto Rico. Her children are all too young to be effective as translators. Her husband is not in evidence. Ms. C. was placed in a motel in Eastern Suffolk [the rural part of the county], following the total burn-out of a multiple dwelling in Western Suffolk. There was need to place many people at that time and the only motel with space sufficient for this large family was many miles away. The staff there is not bilingual...There are no cooking facilities on the premises. Ms. C., [is] unable to communicate sufficiently to order food in the local diner...A services caseworker finds Ms. C to be bewildered and withdrawn. She observes that the children are too frightened to move more than a few feet away from their mother. There is a quality of desperation about the situation.

Families with infants have no means of sterilizing bottles. Generally they wash the babies' bottles out in the bathroom sink and fill them with formula from the can. Some families, of course, surreptitiously use hot plates and coffeepots. This is forbidden because of fire regulations. If found out, they would be evicted from the motels. If not found out, there is the real danger of electric fires resulting from excessive use of these electrical appliances.

Because of the lack of cooking facilities families must eat in restaurants or purchase take-out or packaged food. Many of the local stores do not accept food stamps, which means that families are apt to use up their meager funds before the month is up and then go hungry. A number of the churches provide food pantries, but after a number of years of this crisis, it becomes increasingly difficult to find volunteers. Most of the churches distribute free food only once a week. This provides some relief, but is clearly not the answer.

ACADEMIC

Prior to the establishment of the student social work unit at the motels, no regular social services were available. Currently the School of Social Work provides five students at two of the twelve motels two days per week (this is an internship for masters degree students for which they receive academic experience under the supervision of a trained social worker employed by the school). The social work students refer all children age three and up to Headstart. This program ensures that these children will have an opportunity for early education and enrichment. In other motels, preschoolers may not have this opportunity.

The social work students have also worked closely with the school districts to ensure that school age children are enrolled in the local schools. They have had to advocate for the school buses to pick the children up at the motels. Many other school districts have refused to enroll children of families in emergency housing, claiming they are not taxpayers of the school district. Children of the homeless typically have excessive absences. Families frequently are required to move from one motel to another. Parents often do not enroll the children because they expect to be moving again soon, cannot arrange for transportation, or are so beleagured by all their problems they are not able to mobilize themselves. The social workers report that soon after arriving at the motels, the children enrolled in the local schools are frequently labeled "learning disabled." This is not surprising, given their irregular school attendance, the lack of space and privacy for studying and homework, inaccessibility of libraries, the lack of books, toys and a general deprivation of materials for doing their school work.

PSYCHOLOGICAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL

Even when the children, with the social workers' help, are enrolled in school, they frequently are unable to participate in after school programs. This can be due to the lack of bus service after school hours or the increasingly common requirement that fees be paid for participation in such extra-curricular activities. Clearly, these families are unable to pay anything. Children who previously were good at sports or other developmentally appropriate activities, begin to lag behind and are isolated from their peers. They are in unfamiliar surroundings, have no friends to visit, clearly cannot have friends visit them at the motels, and frequently are picked on by the local children because of where they live or how they are dressed.

Older children, we have observed, often serve as caretakers for other family members. Frequently the older children stay out of school to care for the younger children while the parents are out looking for jobs or housing. In one family a sixteen year old shunned her peers and returned home promptly after school to protect her mentally ill mother. Similar situations have been observed in families with alcoholic parents. Not surprisingly the pressure of homelessness exacerbates whatever problems the parents may have had, resulting in more alcoholism, mental problems and child abuse.

Each year our students must refer families to Child Protective Services. In one extreme case, the other families in the motel complained of a father who was literally throwing his child against the walls of the room. Child Protective Services had to remove the child.

We have observed many children developing acting out behavior after living in the motels. The father of a ten year old boy was a Vietnam veteran with post-Vietnam stress syndrome who refused to go to the Veterans Administration for counseling. The son began to mirror the father's behavior, becoming excessively violent.

In general, families are homeless because they no longer have family, friends or other support systems. For many, homelessness is often part of a syndrome of other problems.

However, living in emergency housing exacerbates these pre-existing problems. The longer they continue this nomadic existence the less likely they are to remain in permanent housing. For other families, homelessness is a situational problem rather than part of a larger problem. For these, who may be the working poor or a family whose breadwinner has become disabled, they and their families experience a rude jolt as they move from a situation of normalcy to the conditions already described. The danger is that over time, with these stresses and insults to the family's dignity and reduced ability to cope, they will also become members of the chronic homeless.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, more low income housing is essential if the growing problem of family homelessness is to be solved, or at least abated. Emergency housing is just that--an immediate answer to an emergency. To maintain people in hotels, motels and shelters is to deprive them and their children of the dignity that human beings need to live a normal life. If we are to avoid a future generation of children academically, developmentally and emotionally maimed, adequate housing must become a national priority.

As essential as adequate housing resources are, they are not enough. Many of these families desperarately need the kind of supportive services our social work students are providing on a limited basis. Families who are already homeless need assistance in finding another place to live, support in getting their children into school, and frequently they need counseling to help them function in a way that will avoid their eviction when they do find a place to live. Furthermore, preventive services are necessary to avoid this problem. Coupled with adequate housing, ordinances forbidding housing discrimination against families with chilren, counseling in parenting and life skills, treatment for alcohol and substance abuse, work with abusing parents, and jobs at decent wages for those who want to work or education and training for those who are not prepared, will minimize the numbers of families who enter the downward spiral of homelessness.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOSEPH RIVERS, PRESIDENT, ORPHAN FOUNDATION

"THE CRISIS IN HOMELESSNESS: EFFECTS ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES"

First of all, I want to commend this Committee for its dedication and hard work in investigating the current state of the American family and for making insightful and practical recommendations to assist children and families living in the United States. Your hearings play a significant role in stimulating debate on this subject, and on behalf of the Orphan Foundation and the foster care and orphan youth involved with our programs, I thank you.

I am President of the Orphan Foundation, a nonprofit private charitable organization which represents and assists orphan youth in America. Our Project Bridge program is designed to help adolescent orphans make the transition from childhood dependence to young adult independence. We provide programs in independent living courses and training in the skills these young peple will need to succeed in the adult world independently—from employment to interpersonal relations to home economics.

As part of Project Bridge, trained adult volunteer counselors are paired one-on-one with youthful participants in our program and provide the guidance, counseling, friendship, and emergency help that are seldom available to children raised outside the traditional family setting.

We believe that the definition of an orphan as someone who has lost both parents through death is obsolete in today's day and age, since family breakups can occur in so many other ways. We define "orphan" as any child who has lost the love and care of natural parents through death, illness, abandonment, neglect, abuse, adjudication, or for any reason.

The enormity of the problem that confronts us is obvious. Over 400,000 young people pass through the youth foster care system annually. Of this number, 130,000 "graduate" from the system every year, most without the security of a family to turn to or the skills to support themselves. Additionally, there are 1.5 million runaway and throwaway youth, the homeless adolescents who have run away from, or been abandoned by, their families.

There are also more than eight million children living in single welfare families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). This means that there are literally ten million young people "at risk" today in America, facing bleak futures because they do not have the proper family support which most of us take for granted.

Statistics also demonstrate that children on welfare often grow up to be adults on welfare. It is clear that the youth foster care system is overburdened and undereffective. The number of adults willing to serve as foster parents is declining alarmingly all across the country.

50% of all foster children live with two or more placements, and 25% live with three or more, so the net result is that after being moved from home to home, adolescents outgrow the system at emancipation. The figures on child welfare recipients who fall prey to drugs or criminal careers are horrifying. 50% of the inmates of Rikers Island in New York City and 35% of the prostitutes on Times Square grew up in the child welfare system, according to the Children Need Parents Campaign in New York City.

What can we do to prevent this vicious cycle—children on welfare becoming adults on welfare? Clearly, we must promote efforts to teach them the life skills that will need to find employment and survive on their own. The Orphan Foundation can provide a model for private initiatives to address this problem.

All the other national associations that deal with the problem of child welfare are the voice of one or another of the service-providing agencies, e.g. public and private social service agencies, social workers, foster parents, and other service-providing agencies. The Orphan Foundation speaks out for the utlimate consumer of these services—the orphans themselves—since we are not affiliated with any of the service-providing agencies.

It is imperative that we make the tremendous collective effort necessary to halt this tragic waste of our most previous national resource, our nation's young people. Not only are new approaches urgently needed, we must be willing to serve as advocates for these orphan youth who need our support desperately. I hope that this Committee can continue its work as advocates for America's homeless and orphan youth and that its reports and conclusions can galvanize our government and our citizens to make the effort to "bridge the gap" for these young people, making it possible for them to build secure, self-sufficient, happy, and productive lives.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BARBARA Y. WHITMAN, PH.D., JACK STRETCH, PH.D., AND PASQUALE ACCARDO, MD.

Homelessness is a growing, unchecked disgrace for the richest nation on earth. It is a documented fact that todays homeless population includes many families with children. Recent surveys indicate that, in some areas, one-half or more of the homeless population are women with dependent children; moreover, one-half of these children are four years of age or younger. Clinical observations have noted these children are malnourished, have significant untreated medical problems, have developmental delays in such basic areas as cognitive development, language, and motor functioning. Further, they have an increased incidence of emotional and behavioral problems. Data from a current project in St. Louis confirms these findings. The St. Louis Homeless Childrens Project provides cognitive and language testing, an individualized educational plan in a day care setting and parent training for families in the Salvation Army Residence for Homeless Families. To date 107 children, ranging in age from 5 months to 17 years have been tested.

These children include 47 (43.9%) boys, 59 (54.2%) girls, 92 (86%) black, 10 (9.3%) white and 3 (2.8%) inter-racial. Two children's sex and race were not noted.

Current analysis of the cognitive testing indicates that 84 (78.5%) of the children received the Slosson Intelligence Test—Revised. The mean IQ for this group of children was 89 with a range from 60–130. Nine (10.7%) of the children tested in the mildly retarded range. An additional 29 (34.5%) of the children tested in the slow learner/borderline range of intelligence. Since at any given time, only 3% of the population tested by this recognized instrument would be expected to fall in the retarded range and 13% should fall in the slow learner/borderline range. It should be noted that these children are displaying cognitive/developmental problems at a rate 3 times that of the general population.

Children were also tested using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test—Revised, designed primarily to measure a childs' receptive vocabulary. Though far from a perfect predicator, vocabulary is a useful single index and reasonable predictor of later school success. Using percentile ranks 80% of these children fall at the 50th percentile or below, suggesting significant language deprivation. Thus it can be predicted for these children significant difficulties in a school situation separate from the overlapping environmental problem of homelessness and its stress on child and family.

It may be argued that these test results are obtained under sub-optimal conditions and do not reflect these childrens' potential. This is arguably true, but so would their school performance be equally compromised by their environmental conditions. In addition, most of these children attend school only sporadically, so that learning becomes discontinuous and overwhelming resulting in even poorer performance.

In short, shelter living is cognitively and emotionally devastating for children. Teachers and other professionals label and treat them as "those shelter kids." They lose any sense of home. Some have suggested that these children learn to put the authority of the shelter personnel first, thereby losing their respect for and sense of protection from their own parents.

Nothing less than a national commitment to government action can prevent raising a generation of children whereby the cycle of homelessness will become as institutionalized as the cycle of welfare/poverty and will result in long term permanent damage in these children.

The direct policy implications are that nothing less than a full scale federal commitment of action on: Expanding the supply of safe, suitable and adequate housing; improving the funding for emergency housing; eliminating both inadequate emergency and condemned housing; adequate services while in shelter care for children; simplify access to services; and immediate attention to break the cycle of homelessness is necessary. To do less is to assign a generation of children to the human trash heap.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REBECCA AYRES, ELIZABETH, NJ

My name is Rebecca Ayres and I am the mother of three children. I have a husband, too named Danny and he works as a truck mechanic for a food company. I have two boys, Daniel 13 and Roger 11 and my daughter, Robin is seven. About two years ago, we were living in an apartment on E. Grand in Elizabeth and at that time we were paying 450.00 a month for rent plus utilities. The landlord increased the rent in December of 1984 from 450.00 to 600.00! We couldn't afford that big of an increase in rent, so we left that apartment to move in with my husband's parents until we could find another place. We thought it would be easy, but all the apartments were either too expensive or, most of the time they would say "No children."

Now, I do feel sorry for women on welfare. But my husband makes $10 an hour and I work part time as a lunch aide. We both finished high school. Something is wrong when working people can't find a place to live! Anyway, my story gets worse . . .

We could only stay with my inlaws till February 1, 1986 because their landlord found out we were living with them and threatened to evict all of us. We have a car. So we lived out of it for several months. My husband works at night. So we used to go to the garage where he fixes the truck and got washed up and warm there. Each morning I would clean the children up and send them off to school from the garage. After a few weeks my husband's boss found out and told us we couldn't do it anymore. So we lived in our Ford Duster. All five of us parking on a different street every night. Actually it was just the four of us because my husband was at work. One time, when we were looking for an apartment, we found a store front for rent. So we pretended we were opening a business so we could live in there. It was so horrible living on the streets freezing in the car that a store front, just one big room looked great to us. After a few weeks, the other stores around us told the owner that we were living in there and not running a business. So he told us to leave. He was nice and wanted to let us stay but he was afraid he would get in trouble cause we had to use the building for business. So, once again, we were facing the streets to live like animals. I couldn't bear to let the children live in the car anymore so I did the only thing I could. I brought them to DYFS and had them placed in a foster home. It broke my heart and I felt like a terrible mother. The kids were in a shelter for children while Danny and I looked for an apartment. We continued to live in the car till we found a little room in Elizabeth. It was so small, just a single bed and a sink . . . nothing else. We had to go out to eat and the rent in this stinky little room was $110 a week. We were spending so much money on our place, food, phone calls and car fare to look that we had no money for an apartment. No one would rent to us anyway because they didn't want children. My kids were first in the shelter in April 1985. In July of 1985, we were told they would be moved to a foster home. I found out about the Elizabeth Coalition to House the Homeless and went there for help. They tried to assist me in finding an apartment. I couldn't find a place so DYFS put my kids in foster homes and split them up! My daugther didn't like the lady she was living with. My DYFS worker put them in a foster home and it was over three weeks before DYFS told me where my kids were. It took a long time before I could talk to them. I was very upset that my daughter didn't like where she was staying and that DYFS controlled when I saw the kids. We could only see them on weekends and they were not allowed to sleep over because our room was too small! I hated DYFS for telling me that I could not see my own children except when they said it was O.K.!

We lived like this until October, 1986 when Joan Driscoll at the Elizabeth Coalition found an apartment for me. We paid the first month's rent but DYFS promised to pay the security because we didn't have enough money. To make a horrible story short, DYFS gave me the money too late and I lost the apartment. My children cried. I wanted to kill myself. All I did since my children were away from me was cry, because I missed them so much. It was like living a nightmare.

Joan at the Coalition got lawyers involved and went to DYFS with me to make them help me since they messed up. They agreed to pay a real estate agent so we could find a place faster. I am so sorry that I ever got involved with DYFS. The Coalition found us another apartment from a woman they helped last year (upstairs was empty) and we finally got that apartment in January 1987. I can't believe now how long I was homeless. I always thought homeless people were alcoholics and drug addicts and it was their fault. There isn't enough housing that will take kids and it's way too expensive for most people. You have to be rich if you want a place to live. I wish I could be with you in person to express myself. But my daughter broke her leg and I have to take care of her.

Just one more thing. When I first got my apartment we only had mattresses for the boys so DYFS wouldn't let the kids come home till they had beds. It seemed like everytime I turned around there was another reason for them not to come home.

Homelessness is a very serious problem and something needs to be done about all the homeless families who have no place to go because housing is too expensive and nobody wants kids. I am lucky to be white so the prejudice issue didn't affect me. I couldn't believe all the homeless families. And many worked that I met at the Coalition. Now I really appreciate how it felt to be homeless so I will be more sensitive. But I just want to say as someone who experienced it. Nothing is worse that being homeless. Many times I wished I was dead. The only thing that kept me going was my children . . . I wanted them back very badly. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

DUGGAN, DENNIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR; JAMES GAMBLE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, SAN ANTONIO METROPOLITAN MINISTRIES, SAN ANTONIO, TX

TRENDS OF HOMELESSNESS AMONG FAMILIES

San Antonio Metropolitan Ministries
San Antonio, Texas, February 27, 1987

The single most demanding need among the homeless in San Antonio is to provide emergency housing for families. Although the needs of other homeless individuals have not stopped, the apparent increase of families who have suddenly found themselves homeless cannot be ignored.

The SAMM Shelter was organized five years ago as an ecumenical effort by downtown churches to provide basic shelter during the cold winter months for individuals living on the street for whom the three existing shelters in San Antonio had no space. Since then seven more shelters have opened providing approximately 700 beds for the estimated four to sixteen thousand homeless in San Antonio. The new facility for the SAMM Shelter opened in 1985 and provides six family rooms in the capacity of 236 beds. The increasing demand for family space has resulted in family space to be arranged in 6 of the 10 shelters and a plan by the SAMM Shelter to renovate their building in order to expand the number of family units.

Trends among homeless families have been documented at the SAMM Shelter since April of 1986 (see Chart 1). Comparing last summer to this winter, several trends have been noted. Among them, it is apparent that among family admissions, families of color have increased, average age has decreased, average family size has increased and level of education has stabilized at a ninth grade average. By far the single most common variable among homeless families continues to be unemployment which has increased from 73% to 82%. The most dramatic change among our families has been the growth of single parent families from 28% to 54% of the total families admitted and the number of teen-age parents that has increased from 0.7% to 12.3%.

Seventy-five per cent of the families are from Texas. Sixty-six per cent of the families have lost housing from family and/or friends and another 26.8% come from a recent divorce, seperation, or abusive situation even though two shelters for battered women operate in San Antonio. The level of unemployment, increase of single-parent families and average length of homelessness prior to admission may suggest or even substantiate the need to expand low-income housing in San Antonio. From the records of the admitted families it is apparent that homelessness tends to originate from two directions. The impact of unemployment on the family leads to the doubling-up of families with relatives and friends. From here, homelessness leads to a request for emergency shelter when the resources in the doubled-up household cannot meet the needs of the unemployed family. Without employment or financial resources of some sort, the family is disqualified from subsidized housing. The other direction of homelessness is the rapidly growing number of single-parent families, most of whom are headed by women. Half the mother headed households at the shelter have come from divorce, seperation, or abuse. Such families are eligible for AFDC in Texas as well as subsidized housing when they remain single parents. However, the lack of subsidized housing units and the lengthening waiting lists also lengthens the period of homelessness. In addition to these first-time homeless, never employed, there is also a growing number of teen-age parents that have added themselves to the list of the homeless.

The social and emotional consequences on all the homeless families is staggering. Often the stress and humiliation contributes to child abuse (two reported cases in the shelter in 7 weeks), spouse abuse, and marital seperation, as well as depression which can affect the motivation for looking for work or applying for resources and marital reconciliation. Unfortunately, almost as many families are administratively discharged (usually for fighting or intoxication) as are discharged to stable housing and employment or AFDC ((29.2% to 33.3%). Resources for the therapeutic aspect of emergency shelter remain beyond the reach of most shelters. Renovating space to provide walls for family units sometimes masks the problems of the family and exacerbates them instead of providing the privacy and integrity for which they were designed.

We have noticed a desperate need among the newly homeless teen-age and single-parent families. This is a high risk group for child abuse as are unemployed families. The need for improving inadequate and sometimes non-existant parenting skills has been demonstrated daily in the shelter. Additionally, the Family Nurse Practioner for Health Care for the Homeless at the SAMM Shelter reports that of over 50 pregnant women seen by her in the shelter clinic none had previous prenatal care. Exposure related illnesses seem to predominate among all shelter guests, such as upper-respitory illnesses and ear infections among children.

Developmentally, it has been noted that the tentativeness and stress of living in such a large facility can affect the role achievement of children. Insufficient room for play and inadequate facilities creates its own stress on children. At times they surely must feel that they are responsible for the family's homelessness. Because of unavailable or unaffordable child-care, the length of homelessness may grow, knowing that without someone responsible for babysitting, the parent cannot get to that job interview or housing application interview. Even potty-training may be delayed or ignored during residence at a shelter. At least one mother has said, "As soon as we get settled down somewhere, we can . . ." to any number of childhood tasks to be accomplished. Although the SAMM Shelter resources are limited we are attempting to address the accreditation difficulties of child-care, after-school care as well as a women's support group that may provide nothing more than a forum for the pain that the mothers are experiencing. This is compounded when family separation is taken into account. Any separation is traumatic-- but what will a child feel and how will a child react to a new stressful environment of a shelter in addition to dealing with "Where's Daddy?" or "Where's Momma?"

Academically, coming to an emergency shelter usually requires enrolling in a new district or a new school. One family reported having to enroll the children in their fourth elementary school in six months because of their homelessness. Other families give up entirely on enrolling their children. For many families education is a low priority for a family living in a car or a shelter that can ill afford new clothes, school supplies, or a place to do homework. Although we require all school-age children to be enrolled in school, it is obvious that we cannot provide adequate environment for study. At the outset, one must acknowledge that the 9th grade average education of the parents does little to encourage the children of the value of education.

In conclusion, the impact of the length of time a family is homeless must be addressed, not just the experience of being homeless. We know through crisis intervention studies that the length of time that a person can exist without being emotionally and socially damaged is relatively short when experiencing a traumatic life crisis. Although most families have the ability to overcome the effects of the crisis when given the opportunity for some stability, it must be noted that the range of time reported for homelessness among the families admitted to the shelter includes one day to three years. Sixty-four per cent of the families reported being homeless one month or less. However, 19.6% reported being homeless (including "doubled-up" for housing with other family or friends) one year or more. The issue at hand of a family who has been homeless or near homeless for months and months is that of priority and displacement. What is this month's priority for a homeless family? What is this day's priority for a homeless family? When a family has to worry about the next meal it is difficult to concentrate on looking for work. If an illness occurs among just one of the family members all other considerations for the homeless family may become unaddressed. In such a crisis oriented state, it is no wonder that more child abuse, spouse abuse, or acute anxiety states will occur. Problem-solving capabilities diminish when resources are depleted.

If the current Congressional agenda for budget cuts continue, it may be assumed that the holes in the safety net of social benefits and entitlements could widen and drop more families onto the street and into the shelters for the homeless. It is our appeal on the behalf of the homeless that subsidized housing and emergency funds for the homeless to overcome security, utility, and first month's rent be expanded in order to shorten the length of time a family is homeless and to keep these families and their children from experiencing the street.

Respectfully submitted,

Dennis Duggan

Dennis Duggan
Executive Director
James Gamble
Deputy Director

CHART ONE

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY UNITS

SAMM SHELTER

	SUMMER 1986 (April-Sept.)	WINTER '86-87 (Nov.-Feb.)	TOTAL
1. Families Admitted	90	56	146
2. Families Discharged	90	48	138
3. Ongoing Families	0	8	8
4. Ethnic Distribution			
Hispanic	47	33	80
Anglo	37	18	55
Black	6	5	11
	90	56	146
5. Average Age			
husband	31.9	31.7	31.8
wife	28.5	25.3	27,2
children	5.3	5.1	5.2
6. Average Number of family members	3.43	3.61	3.5
7. Years of Education			
husband	10.7*	9.0	
wife	10.1*	9.9	
		9.6	
8. Single Parent Families	26 (28%)	30 (54%)	56 (38.4%)
9. Teen Age Parents	1 (0.7%)	10 (12.3%)	11 (4.8%)
10. Unskilled/Blue Collar*	NA	26 (96%)	
11. Military Veteran*	NA	7 (25.9%)	
12. Residence One Year Prior to Admission	NA		
1) from out of county		14 (25%)	
2) from out of state		14 (25%)	
3) from inside Bexar Co.		28 (50%)	

*7. Summer level of education estimated.

*10, 11. Percentages relected on the basis of 27 males.

	SUMMER		WINTER		TOTAL	
13. Situations Leading to Homelessness*						
1) Unemployment	66	(73%)	46	(82%)	112	(76.7%)
2) Lost Housing from Family/Friends	NA		37	(66%)		
3) Divorce, Seperation, Abuse	NA		15	(26%)		
14. Presenting Problems of Family Units	NA					
1) Homeless			56	(100%)		
2) Unemployed			32	(57%)		
3) Waiting Entitlement			15	(26.8%)		
4) Abuse			3	(5.3%)		
5) Legal			2	(3.6%)		
6) Refugee			2	(3.6%)		
7) Convalescing			1	(1.8%)		
15. Average Length of Homelessness Prior to Admission*	NA		–			
1) Range			1 day - 36 months			
2) Average			1.7 mos. - 3.3 mos.			
3) 1 month or less			36	(64%)		
4) 1 year or more			11	(19.6%)		
16. Discharge Status*						
1) Out of county			4	(8.3%)		
2) Out of state			5	(10.4%)		
3) To relatives/friends			18	(37.5%)		
4) To Federally Subsidized Housing			7	(14.6%)		
5) To Employment and Housing	18	(20%)	11	(22%)	29	(21%)
6) To Employment or AFDC and Housing	19	(21%)	16	(33.3%)	35	(25.4%)
7) Administrative	9	(10%)	14	(29.2%)	23	(16.7%)
8) Averoge Days in Shelter	19.3		21.4		20.5	

*13. Percentages not cummulative.

*15. Longer figure reflects homelessness in its expanded sense, e.g. "doubling up" in the home of someone else.

*16. Percentages not cummulative.

The Junior League of Atlanta, Inc.

February 19, 1987

Representative George Miller
Select Committee on Children and Youth
Room 385
House Annex II
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Representative Miller:

The Junior League of Atlanta is pleased to know that Dr. Nancy Boxill will be testifying to the Select Committee on Children and Youth regarding the needs of homeless children on February 24 at 9:30 a.m. Little is known about this population, and we feel Dr. Boxill's research in this area will be a major contribution towards learning how to meet the needs of these very needy children.

Serving homeless children and their families is a major focus of the Atlanta Junior League. In 1986, we developed the Atlanta Children's Shelter which provides day shelter to homeless children and support services to their families so they don't languish in homelessness. Our midyear statistical report has recently been completed, and we have served 312 children from 185 different families. We are pleased to report that 115 of these families are no longer homeless. The Atlanta Junior League gave initial funding of $100,000 which will be matched over the next four years, and we have seventy volunteers actively involved. The project has been selected as a model program to be presented at the Association of Junior League's annual conference in Nashville in May.

We applaud Dr. Boxill for her innovative research. Please give serious consideration to directing research and resources to this special group of children.

Yours truly,

Marcia Robinson

Marcia Robinson
President, Junior League of Atlanta

Lynn Merrill

Lynn Merrill
Board Chairman, Atlanta Children's Shelter

MR/LM:hh

Celebrating 70 years of Community Service

3154 Northside Parkway, NW Atlanta, Georgia 30327 404/261-7799

AN EXPLORATION OF MOTHER/CHILD INTERACTION AMONG HOMELESS WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN USING A PUBLIC NIGHT SHELTER IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Nancy A. Boxill, Ph.D.
Anita L. Beaty

Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless
970 Jefferson Street, N.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30318
(404) 872-3603

INTRODUCTION

Virtually every major urban center in America is experiencing a growing population of homeless people. A surprisingly large number of the homeless are women and their children. This article does not attempt to define homelessness, estimate its proportions, report its antecedents or suggest public solutions. Rather the focus of this study is an exploration of the relationship between mothers and their children who find themselves in a most unusual circumstance. The study begins to elucidate the experience of these families as they interact in difficult circumstances. The authors believe that until the experience of this population is carefully explored and sensitively understood, the effectiveness of programs and policies designed to serve this population succeeds, at best, by chance. The data for understanding the relationship of these mothers and their children is experience. The seminal thoughts for planned change and social policy assessment must include this data.

Little research has been conducted on homeless women and their children. The most comprehensive study to date was conducted by Dr. Ellen Bussuk of the Harvard University Medical School. Data from this study clearly identifies children as the major victims of homelessness. Dr. Bussuk reports that among preschool children, one-half of those studied evidenced one major developmental delay other than speech. One-third of the population evidenced two major developmental delays. Among school-aged children, 45% reported having repeated at least one grade in school, and most evidenced high levels of anxiety and depression (Bussuk 1986). These are important data. They serve to provide some understanding. Yet there is certainly more to understand. The combination of quantitative data by Dr. Bussuk and the qualitative data of the authors increases the opportunities for the human service community to meet the actual needs of this population.

There is little disagreement that the mother/child relationship has far reaching and extremely important value in the healthy growth and well being of children. Early documentation of the importance of this relationship is well reported by Bowlby in his work on bonding and attachment. The continuing influence of the mother/child relationship on personality, self-concept and developmental foundation is well documented throughout the professional literature. There is also full realization in the professional literature that environment, more specifically "personal place," is a key determinator in an individual's definition of him/herself. People and places are not independent parts of living. "Personal place" describes one's group membership and potently contributes to one's definition of his/her personal qualities and abilities (Rivlin, 1986). This study elucidates and thematizes the experience of homeless women and children who use a public night shelter and are by circumstance forced to define themselves and build their mother/child relationships in an open and public, personal place.

Summary of Daily Experience

Homelessness for a woman with children is a particularly devastating experience. The search for shelter often evolves from having lived recently with family or friends. Homelessness means that a mother must carry with her and her children all that they own because most shelters have no storage space. Operated by volunteers, most shelters require their guests to leave by 6:00 AM. A woman living in a night shelter must awaken her children, dress, feed and repack them, and leave to get a bus at the required time. If her children go to school, they need clean clothes every day. And if they get out of school at 3:30, they have to find a place to go to wait until the shelter opens in the evening.

If she has preschool children, the homeless mother can get a bus to the Children's Day Shelter, where she must get in line as early as possible to secure a place in the center. If she is not able to get her children into the Day Shelter, she will have to take them with her. If she goes to the women's day shelter, she can keep them there with her, but that shelter is chaotic and serves as a haven for single women, many of whom are chronically homeless and mentally ill.

Applying for public assistance and housing is a process that intimidates even the well-informed, but if a women is also burdened with children during that process, the frustrations may be overwhelming. Nevertheless, many women who are homeless mothers successfully negotiate this incredibly complicated process without any support or assistance. Then the wait for housing begins -- or the wait for employment and for calls that must come to the Day Shelter for Women. Without a phone, the woman looking for a job depends on the determination of potential employers even to contact her.

If the mother has been able to get her children into the Day Shelter for Children, she must pick them up again by 5:00. Then they get a bus to the night shelter where they usually wait until 6:30 to get in. If the homeless mother knows she might be late getting into the night shelter, she must inform the shelter personnel in advance and arrange to have her "space" reserved until she arrives. Dinner is provided by volunteers who prepare and serve the meal at about 8:00 PM.

Each family stakes claim to a space for the night – mother may set up a number of mats or cots for her family. Young children occasionally fall off the cots, so a choice is often made to arrange a set of mats on the floor in a space large enough to accommodate the whole family. Sheets and towels are provided by the shelter and distributed carefully each night.

Mothers sign up to take showers and to wash their clothes. Showering is the only option for bathing, so the mother takes her younger children into the shower with her, if she wants them bathed. Washing and ironing clothes for the next day occupies much of the evening time. And while mother is laundering the children play, mostly without supervision, on the gymnasium floor.

By 9:00 PM the children are supposed to go to bed. Many of the smaller children are asleep well before this time and are the source of consternation for the older children who play around them. The older children are constantly admonished to watch out for the little ones who are trying to sleep. Some of the mothers retire to the dining room to smoke, talk, fix each other's hair, watch television or use the telephone.

Each and every activity at the shelter is done in public, that is, the women do their mothering in the company and full view of others. We have called this "public mothering."

Methodology

Population

The shelter users were not a monolithic group. The mothers ranged in age from 19 to 42, and the children ranged in age from 7 days to 17 years. The group included many races, varied status and antecedents to homelessness. The only common denominator was the circumstance of being without a home.

Data Collection

This study employs qualitative methodology as a means of describing and critically analyzing the mother/child interaction among homeless women and their children who use a night shelter. Qualitative methodology places the highest value on insightful understanding of human experience as the goal of social science investigation. It views human experience as the primary data for analysis. To that end, participant/observation and open-ended interviews were the selected techniques of data collection producing descriptive data which emphasizes and facilitates the understanding of a particular human experience within a specific context of social interaction (Patton, 1979). The use of these techniques permitted the researchers to participate as full partners in the experience under the investigation and to express our own points of view about our observations while reporting and analyzing individual and group experiences as they unfolded. These are most desirable characteristics in social problem research (Wirth, 1979).

The open-ended or unstructured interview allowed the researchers to capture through questioning and conversation the words of the subjects rather than a summary of responses. All conversational approaches were intended to elicit the subjects' understanding of their world/relationship rather than a particular piece of information or singular response. The data represents the results of hours of participant observation of homeless mothers and their children. Forty (40) families who utilized a public night shelter in Atlanta, Georgia, were observed over a six-month period.

Data Analysis

The experiences and observations reported in this article were thematized in the mode of phenomenological investigation as described by Colazzi (1975), Giorgi (1970) and Wertz (1982). The thematization of individual descriptions permits shared experiences to be grouped for enhanced understanding. It also preserves and includes people's own words (written or spoken), observed behavior, letters, poems, etc. (Bogden, 1975). This form of analysis benefits clinicians, program planners and policy makers. The use of quotation marks indicates the actual language used by mothers and children.

Six themes emerged from the authors' observation. Each them stands alone and is discussed separately. Other researchers and human service professionals may be guided in important new directions for action. The over-arching theme/concept that emerged was the difficulty mothers and their children as family units have in establishing and maintaining ordered mother/child relationship.

CHILDRENS' THEMES

THEME 1: Intense Desire to Demonstrate Internalized Values as a Way of Asserting Self.

The hours that children spend in the night shelter were observed as essentially unstructured time. The majority of activity was random play among children of widely divergent ages, typified by abandoned running up and down the gym. This random activity was restricted only by fixed times for meals, bathing, lights–out, and early morning preparation for leaving the shelter. As a way to be non-random, many of the children observed created ways to define, introduce, and assert themselves to each other and to the nameless volunteers who were only temporary visitors from the larger world. In their own ways the children insisted on being known from the inside. They resisted adult attempts to clump them into a category of deprived, poor or even pitiful children.

Example: Debra, an eight-year-old, tells me who she is on the inside as we share an experience in the kitchen of the shelter following dinner. Debra entered the kitchen and watched me begin to clean up. We greeted each other with our eyes, and she asked, "Can I have a job to do?" I was pleased to include her and suggested she gather all of the serving spoons.

We exchanged small talk as we worked. When she was finished, she instructed me, "Give me another job." I responded immediately by asking her to cover the left-over food. Once again upon completion she said, "Nancy, can I have another job?" I asked her then to rinse out the dish cloths. When the kitchen was clean and Debra had completed her jobs, she announced that she was "all done." I praised her warmly and expressed how proud I thought her Mom must be to have such a good helper in the family. Debra smiled and asked, "Will you give me something for doing my jobs?" I was surprised. I prepared to give her a lecture on work and rewards. My thoughts came slowly, and I simply said, "No, I have nothing to give you." Quite seriously she said, "Yes, you do." My mind anticipated a request for money or more dessert. I asked, "What do I have to give you?" Her eyes brightened and seemed to hide a special surprise as she said, "You can give me a hug. You can always give a hug when you have nothing else to give." Knowing Debra now from her inside and feeling embarrassed, I gave her a strong, warm, hug, tearful all the while. Debra had asserted herself, making explicit a genuine description of her worth in the world. She provided me with a glimpse into her value system for herself and others.

Kevin, age 6, asserted his intention to be seen as a whole, choosing actor-in-the-world. His actions in the following experience evidenced his strength in resisting a caption of "dependent urchin" gladly receiving charity. He entered the kitchen forcefully and clearly requested more food from a group of volunteers of a local church. With pride and manners he said, "May I have seconds? But don't give me any of that chicken. I don't like it; I want the other meat." What I heard and saw was his refusal to allow nameless adults to describe his world. I watched and experienced him as feeling confident in his ability to discriminate and be known by his likes and dislikes. He was not afraid to say "no."

The many ways in which children of all ages continually and emphatically said who they were was astounding to me. Viewed in the context of self-assertion of values and identity in an identitiless circumstance, the children's "yes's" and "no's" took on new meaning. The children protected and expressed their self-esteem. They carved out their identities and special individual capacities and qualities. There is room for speculation on how these children came to develop their values, etc. But no conclusion can exclude their mothers as primary adults who actively embraced their roles as purveyors of values.

Mary, a fourteen-year-old, drew a picture of a Greek goddess in ten minutes as we talked. At her mother's prideful prompting, she listed the name and history of the goddess. Mother and child were happy all the while.

THEME 2: Questioning the Certainty of Anything, The Ambiguity of Everything

For most of the children in the night shelter, "tomorrow" is a fuzzy, ambiguous prospect. There is only the certainty of the morning routine of leaving the shelter. The remainder of the day is not assured. Among themselves the children spoke about being different from other children they had known. Many did not go to school. Those who did go to school feared that their peers would find out that they had no address, no home. They had mixed feelings about the kindness of the volunteers and strangers who brought them food and clothes. They knew that they acquired the basic necessities of life in a different way from other children.

Nothing, no part of their day, was predictable. They slept in different spaces in the shelter. Among strangers, they ate foods that were sometimes unfamiliar or prepared in unfamiliar ways. There was no assurance that any adult would have the capacity or interest to help them negotiate the world or bring order to daily living. They lived in a gap of uncertainty.

For a few hours during the night their lives were influenced by well-meaning volunteers who invited them to play games with strange rules, encouraged them to behave in ways which exceed parental limits and discourage opportunities to confront or explore the reality of their world. The children reacted by vascillating between controlled deference and polite requests. They alternated between taking the ball away from the group and returning shortly with a request to "please play basketball." They avoided conversations with adults, moms or volunteers; they returned shortly with a verbal or physical demand for attention. They rejected the clothing brought by volunteers yet fought over a single article of clothing selected or given to another child. They made stealing a game, yet insisted on rigid adherence to uncompromising rules in their roles as surrogate parents to younger siblings. Their behavior evidenced attempts to control volunteers by shoving, pulling or jumping on their backs.

The younger children often screamed and cried when they were out of Mother's reach. Their facial expressions bore the fear of being abandoned. They cried over and over "Mama, Mama", although Mama was clearly within sight if not reach. It was an exaggerated response. Many of the preschool children have retained their playfulness and hopefulness. Mary, age 5, asked Whitney, age 4, with great drama and body language, "But when will I know things? I want to know things, and my Mama doesn't have time to teach me (hanging her head in her hands). I don't know anything." Whitney calmly replied, "You will know things; it just takes time. Maybe one day you can go to school." "When" is written on Mary's face. Keisha, age 9, expressed profound ambivalence about her place in the world as she hung herself around my neck and back asking me how many children I had. I said "none." "Oh," she said, "my Mom says that people who don't have children are blessed." Not believing my ears, I said, "She's right. It is a blessing to have children." With firmness she said, "No, she said people who *don't* have children are blessed." Not believing my ears, I said, "She's right. It is a blessing to have children." With firmness she said, "No, she said people who *don't* have children are blessed." Her whole body asked me what I thought. I felt her question on my insides and simply hugged her, unable at that moment to assuage her uncertainty – not feeling strong enough to affirm her. It was much later in the evening, before I left the shelter, that I found Keisha and told her that I was sure that meeting her was a blessing in my life.

Some of the older teens had given up on "trying to make the best of a bad situation." They sat silently, sadly, and alone. Their words were, "I'm okay," but their body language said, "Please, don't see me. I can't decide how I want to be seen."

THEME 3: Conflict Over the Need for Attention and the Experienced Demand for Independence

With few exceptions, the children in the shelter called the female volunteers "Mama" or "Mommy." They reached for volunteers' hands and climbed on their backs or laps seeking physical contact. They unabashedly demanded physical attention while simultaneously abruptly disconnecting and running away. Almost in the middle of a sentence and/or game they would disappear to join a group of children playing, and just as abruptly, they returned.

This pattern was repeated throughout the night. They ran to their moms, forcing themselves into their arms or laps, then ran away to find another activity, conversation, reward or event. They seemed to want to know they could be dependent, yet needed to show that they could be independent.

Their daily life requires both. They need adults in all of the ways that children need adults. They know that they must also find ways to relieve their moms of the fear and worry that they are okay. Often in provoking fights with other children, they return to tell their moms of victory or pain. Children of all ages constantly juggled the message that, on one hand, they can stick it out alone, and on the other hand, mom is there for them.

MOTHERS' THEMES

THEME 4: Public Mothering

Among this population, mothers and their children may not ever interact in private. Every aspect of daily living is conducted in full public view. Every aspect and nuance of the mother/child relationship occurs and is affected by its public and often scrutinized nature. From waking to waking, mothers and their children live in shared spaces. Family units that have previously enjoyed the freedom to express love, caring, frustration, anger and all manner of other emotions in their own homes are now forced to: express their feelings in communal settings, subject themselves to prevailing shelter rules for communal living, stifle their strongest and deepest feelings, expose their personal style of "mothering" to strangers, capitulate to peer pressure, and catch glimpses of who they appear to be in the eyes of onlookers.

Yvonne, a mother of three children confessed, "I know I sometimes do things [to my children] that somebody else expects me to do to them. I can't [even] let my seven-month-old cry because he might bother the others. So one night I sat up all night in the dining room holding him. He was restless and whining. Other mothers yelled at me to 'get that baby quiet.'" She expresses sadness and concern that her own mothering was influenced and often even directed by the presence and needs of other mothers. We both wondered when and how she would carve out her own style of mothering. More importantly we wondered how and when her children would come to really know her.

Karen, a young mother of four children, was deeply sad and defeated as she talked about the stress of her daily routine as a homeless mother. "Every morning I want to cry. At five o'clock in the morning I have to wake up my children. They are not ready to wake up. They cry and get hysterical every morning. They cry for hours, it seems." Her eyes and body said, "I feel cruel, but what can I do?" The director of the Children's Shelter commented to the author that Karen's children and others are often very upset when they arrive for the day.

Scenes of one mother verbally attacking another mother unfold throughout the night. Comments like, "I don't let my child do that," or "They just let their kids do whatever they want, they don't care," are voiced in accusatory tones. If one can separate the hostility and anger of the tones from the circumstances, the pressure of public mothering emerges clearly. When mothering is constantly unfolding in full public view, family life and mother/child relationships appeared to the observer and are experienced by the mother as being "out of order."

THEME 5: Unraveling of the Mother Role

On initial review of the data, the authors called the theme "role reversal." But further, more careful review and analysis led us to correct our terminology to reflect more accurately and report our observations. "Unraveling" was determined to be a more appropriate term. The authors regularly observed teen-aged girls taking the leadership in preparing sleeping spaces, doing laundry, or caring for younger siblings. Teenagers became, in many instances, surrogate mothers as they disciplined, fed, bathed and bedded younger siblings. The authors came to know that such a picture was incomplete. In fact, the clear eye was able to see that mothers had not abdicated their roles or responsibilities. Rather, mothers were being soothed and nurtured by the efforts of their older children. In an unkind and often assaulting world, mothers were comforted by their children's special acts of assistance and caring. A nightly ritual in one family involved the combing and braiding of the mother's hair by one daughter while her other daughter carefully folded and stored the mother's clothes.

Martha, a 24-year-old mother of four children under five years of age, spoke quite clearly about the vital role her children played in her emotional well-being: "I don't get depressed about not having a place to live as long as I can be with my babies. They make me happy." Similar comments from others included, "We are all we have. It's just us alone against everybody else, and that's okay." Throughout the observations and conversations, mothers reported that they found solace and temporary relief from emotional pain through the role their children played in loving them. The children were observed to have behaved and functioned by intuition or request in ways that mothers would ordinarily behave. Holding constant Erickson's mutuality of the growth process, we believe that in this circumstance the mother's role, without the opportunity to be a provider, was unraveling.

Instances of unraveling also included meal-time experiences. Mothers and their children (served by volunteers) sat with petulant faces and spoke in childish tones saying "I don't want any squash," or "Take that off my plate," or to their children, "Don't eat that, it's nasty." Mothers argued about their places in line at meal, bath, or bedtimes. These incidents always occurred in the company of children. Where normally it is anticipated that adults set the standard for civility, compromise, and cooperation, shelter living seemed to provoke the unraveling of that responsibility and the assumption of childlike behavior on the part of the adults. Mothers appeared to have temporarily become children along with their children.

THEME 6: The Experience of Being Externally Controlled

The circumstance of being "homeless" provides numerous opportunities for "others" to determine the daily events of a mother's life, options for change and the context of the mother/child relationship. "I don't feel like I control anything," was a pervasive expression among the mothers. The traditional role of mother as provider, family leader, organizer and standard setter was experienced by the mothers as having vanished. Someone other than mother decided when and where the family would rest, bathe or secure housing and health care. Another determined what her family ate, evaluated her abilities as a parent, judged her to need supportive services, parent training for fitness to retain custody of her children. If a mother is determined by others to be using the day time hours in non-productive or unmeaningful ways, she could be eliminated from the day shelter program. If a mother or family received more than two meals a day in a shelter, they were determined to be ineligible for food stamps.

The mother's ability to re-establish order in her family and to re–assert control over her life was often limited to the single and powerful use of the word "no." By saying a clear and confident "no," whether to squash, bouncing basketballs, misbehaving, crying children or helping persons, mothers took control from the "other"; thereby ordering the hierarchy of daily living and relationships. The use of "no" as a verbal response, silent or active behavior, is not negative (in the mother's experience). The use of "no" by these mothers appears to be a creative and often positive resistance to dependence and external control. It seems to be an active step toward regaining that which has been lost, an ordered mother/child relationship.

CONCLUSIONS

This article sets aside the psychiatric description of the population found by Bassuk (1986). This article presents instead a complementary description of relationships rather than an assessment of characteristics.

Data from this study clearly reveals that homelessness as a context for mother/child relationships forces an "out-of-order" relationship. It is important here to distinguish homelessness as a "circumstance" in which people use their energies to secure shelter, from homelessness as a "context" for relationships. The authors of this study focused on the latter. This context then, produces relationships which are lived out in public. Mothers and children in this circumstance become public families, forced to engage in each and every task of daily living in full public view. The total spectrum of trivial to significant family action and interaction is open to public intervention. For these families, heretofore private life, i.e. eating, bathing, telephone conversation, is now public life with permission.

Such a peculiar context for living leads the authors to refer to the mother/child relationship as "out-of-order" rather than "disordered." The absence of a home distorts the role of mother and child. Mothers lose opportunities to act as primary nurturers, teachers, negotiators and survival guides. A host of rotating volunteers, human service professionals and varied strange intruders (i.e., reporters, funding sources researchers) assume with confidence and authority the functions normally and previously assumed by mothers.

As mothers become less assured of their abilities and opportunities to mother, children appear to become less confident and assured of their present and increasingly ambiguous about their future. The children experience uncomfortably divided loyalties. The adult-stranger provides the essentials of life: food, clothing, shelter, and often nurturing. The child is appreciative and hopeful for their permanence. The child is also aware that little is permanent except his/her mother. With whom shall I play before bedtime becomes a critical question for the child. The only certain entity of tomorrow is Mom. Yet the certainty of the moment is the volunteer. The natural mutuality of the mother/child relationship is temporarily "out-of-order." The ways in which a mother can mother are limited. Likewise are the ways in which a child can child. Psychologically or physically moving away from each other may mean getting one's needs met; such movement, however, is always followed by moving toward each other for circumscribed safety. The stress and sadness of all of this is that, for these families "homelessness" is a new context for their relationships.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If the mother/child relationship can be considered "out-of-order", the implications for programming are strong.

1. Publicly supported day and night shelters would do well to reassess and strengthen the opportunities available for families to have private time if not space. We believe that any effort to afford a family living in public a moment of privacy will enhance opportunities to restore

order to their relationships. Wherever practical or possible, volunteers or professionals should encourage the creation of private moments in even the most public places.

2. The use of volunteers must be reassessed. Where volunteers are unintentionally replacing or usurping mothering roles, the shelter program should be corrected. Consider meal, recreation and clean-up times as opportunities for the mother/child relationship "to re-order" itself naturally.

3. Children should be encouraged to feel less ambiguous about the elements of tomorrow. This can be accomplished through the "re-ordered" mother/child relationship and by the guided activity of volunteers. Every effort should be made to provide children with structured and unstructured, supervised and unsupervised opportunities to be affirmed and to express their feelings.

The authors do not suggest that every mother/child relationship among homeless women and children is out-of-order. We know too well that "homelessness" is the homogeneous factor. However, we believe that based on these data, the opportunities for "out-of-orderness" loom ever present among the total population.

Further study is needed to describe more clearly the experience of persons in this circumstance and the nature of relationships in such a context.

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Families: The New Homeless

by

Kay Young McChesney
University of Southern Californial

When I mention "the homeless," what image comes to mind? Who do you think of? Most people share two images of the homeless. One is the skid row "bum," the alcoholic lying on the sidewalk with a bottle clutched to his chest. The second is the "bag lady," talking animatedly to people only she can see, as she pushes her shopping cart along the street. The image of the young mother with her three-month old baby, living in a garbage dumpster, doesn't come to mind. Neither does the image of the welder from Kentucky with his wife and two small children, driving across the country in an old beat-up pickup truck, looking for work. Neither does the image of the suburban mother of three who has been evicted from an apartment she could no longer afford after she and her husband separated. Yet families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population (Stoner, 1983.) Families--mothers and children, couples and children--are the new homeless.

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1 Homeless Families Project, Social Science Research Institute, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089-1111; (213) 743-2966. The Homeless Families Project is funded by the Ford Foundation, grant #850-0590.

Homeless alcoholics have been an inner-city phonomenon for many years. The psychiatrically disabled homeless became part of the urban scene in the 1970s. But now, for the first time since the Depression, there are families living in our streets; and not just in the inner city, but in suburbs and towns as well. As an attorney who has been associated with Legal Aid for many years put it, "Ten years ago poor families came to us for help with landlord/tenant problems. Now, they come to us because they're homeless." (Personal communication, 1985.) What has happened? Why are there families living in our streets? Why are they there now, when they didn't seem to be there only a few years back? These are the questions I would like to address in this article.

I would like to argue that the current crisis in homelessness among families is the result of a shift in the balance between the number of low-income families and the amount of low-income housing available. Changes in the economy, in social policy and in demographic trends, beginning in the 1970s and accelerating in the early 1980s, affected the equilibrium between the number of poor families and the availability of housing they could afford. By 1983, the balance had tipped. The new equation was simple: there were now significantly more low-income families, while at the same time there was less low-cost housing. The homeless families that are evident in streets and shelters across the country are the net result of this disproportion.

More Poor Families

The welfare of American families improved steadily for over twenty years after World War II. After the War on Poverty began in 1964, the number of people living in poverty fell rapidly, reaching its lowest point, 11.1 percent, towards the end of the Vietnam conflict in 1973. While times got harder with high unemployment rates and high inflation rates during the 1970s, in 1979 the number of families living in poverty stood at 12.7 percent, about the same as in 1973.

However, under the influence of severe back-to-back recessions, and the Reagan administration's cuts in eligibility and benefit levels for AFDC families, the economic situation of families worsened significantly. Between 1979 and 1983, more than 10 million people, an increase of about 49 percent, fell below the poverty line. By 1983, the poverty rate reached its highest level in 18 years, 15.2 percent. Even after an economic upturn began, in 1984 the unemployment rate still stood at 7.7 percent. Families were hit hard. Mean family income fell by about five percent, for a total drop of 8.3 percent from 1973 to 1984. By 1984 the number of families living below the poverty line had increased by more than 25 percent, from 12.7 percent to 17.4 percent (Danziger and Gottschalk, 1985.)

Faced with recession, regressive tax policies and cuts in benefits, the poorest families lost the most. Between 1980 and 1984, the average tax burden for the poorest fifth of the U.S. population rose 24 percent, while cash welfare benefits declined

17 percent and food stamp benefits fell 14 percent (Hopper and Hamberg, 1986.) Danziger and Gottschalk (1985) found that over the period of 1973 to 1984, the mean income of the poorest 20 percent of families dropped by 34 percent, while that of the next poorest fifth fell by 20 percent. In contrast, the income of the highest twenty percent fell by only two percent. By 1984 the poorest fifth of families received only 4.2 percent of total family income, while the richest fifth received 42.1 percent.

Thus, by 1983 there were significantly more poor families who could afford only low-cost housing than there had been only a few years before. Homelessness among families on a national scale was inevitable, unless the supply of affordable, low-cost housing increased rapidly to meet the need of large numbers of newly poor families.

Less Low-Income Housing

The high inflation rates and high interest rates of the late 1970s and early 1980s also contributed to record-breaking housing costs (L.A. County Dept. of Regional Planning, 1985.) At the same time, the new administration set about eliminating the federal role in providing low-income housing. These factors plus urban renewal and gentrification resulted in a decrease in the amount of affordable housing available to low-income families.

The Housing Shortage. In response to high interest rates and recession, the number of housing starts fell below the number needed for newly formed households, creating a housing shortage (Hopper and Hamberg, 1986.) As the shortage in supply increased, housing costs rose in response to high demand. In a condition of shortage, higher-income families had to "buy down" or "rent down," filling up housing that lower-income families might previously have occupied. "Gentrification" increased as middle-income families that could no longer afford to buy homes in the suburbs rehabilitated inner-city houses or bought rental units that had been upgraded into co-ops or condos. By 1983 the National Housing Conference estimated that only half of "typical" households that would have bought homes in previous years could afford to purchase a mid-priced house. An estimated four million households that in previous years would have bought homes spilled over into the rental unit market. Vacancy rates fell to five percent nationally and as low as 3.7 percent in the Northeast and 4.4 percent in the West, well below the number needed to accommodate normal turnover (Hopper and Hamberg, 1986.)

Most important, housing costs rose faster than family income. During the 1973-1983 decade median rent rose 137 percent, from $133 to $315, while median family income rose only 79 percent, from $7,200 to $12,900 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1983, cited in Hartman, 1985.) Where possible, families responded to the housing shortage by sharing living quarters. From 1978 to 1983 the number of families "doubled up"--two to a dwelling unit--doubled, to 2.6 million, reversing a thirty-year trend (Hopper and Hamberg, 1986.)

The Low-Income Housing Shortage. As always, the poorest families were the hardest hit. By 1983 Hartman (1985) found that for renters with an annual income under $3,000, the median rent-income ratio--the proportion of a family's income spent for rent--exceeded 60 percent. The comparable figure for renters with an annual income between $3,000 and $6,999 was 55 percent; for renters with an annual income between $7,000 and $9,999, 39 percent; and for renters in the $10,000-$14,999 income class, 31 percent. For reference, in 1983, the poverty line for a family of four was $10,178 (Congressional Budget Office, 1985.)

The Government Drops Out of Low-Income Housing. At the same time that the low-income housing shortage was becoming acute, the Reagan Administration introduced a new housing policy: "We're getting out of the housing business. Period." (HUD Deputy Secretary, cited in Hartman, 1986.) The administration has been as good as its word. Since the Reagan administration came into office, the federal government has mounted a "full-scale retreat from the housing role it began to assume during the New Deal and has followed, however inadequately, over the last 50 years" (Hartman, 1986.) Since 1980 the low-income housing budget has been cut by over 60 percent. In addition, for those families already in federally subsidized housing, HUD increased the amount a low-income family paid for rent from 25 to 30 percent of their income.

The Balance Tips: Homeless Families in America

By 1983, the excess of poor families over available low-income housing was apparent nationally. There were significant numbers of newly poor families, 25 percent more than there had been as recently as 1979. At the same time, the supply of low-income housing had actually decreased. The balance tipped, and homeless families became more and more evident in streets and shelters across the country.

Actually, as Hopper and Hamberg (1986) pointed out, there was no "magic moment" when the threshold was crossed all over the nation. The number of homeless families in each city, and each neighborhood, depends on the balance between low-income families and affordable housing in that area. For example, New York City experienced a 25 percent increase in the number of families seeking shelter as early as 1981. At that time, the average length of stay for a family in the New York City shelter system was two months (Hopper and Hamberg, 1986.) By October of 1984 New York City was sheltering 3100 families a night with an average stay of 7.8 months; by the end of 1985 they were sheltering 4100 families a night with an average stay of over 14 months. In the absence of anywhere else to live, shelters were the new homes of poor families in New York City. On the other hand, the capacity of the low-income housing in your city to absorb the excess of poor families as they try to adjust by doubling and tripling up may not have been exceeded until after 1983.

As New York's experience suggests, although the economy has improved since the end of 1983, the shortage of low-income housing has not. Dolbeare (1986) estimated that in 1980 there were 7.1 million very low-income households competing for 5.3

million affordable low-income housing units[2]. By 1985, he estimated that the number of affordable housing units had decreased by about 20 percent, to 4.2 million, while the number of very low-income households had increased, to 8.1 million. That comes to almost twice as many poor households as there are available low-income housing units. In some states, including my own, California, the ratio is higher--almost four to one.

Now that the balance has tipped, the problem of the acute shortage of low-income housing, and the homeless families that result from that shortage, will be around for a while. At this point in time, the private sector, responsive by definition only to the profit motive, cannot produce housing at a low enough cost to be affordable for low-income families. There also appears to be little chance of a change in the present administration's stance on low-income housing. As I write, in June, 1986, Senate and House versions of the Reagan administration's fiscal year 1987 budget are being reconciled in committee. There are no funds for either constructing or subsidizing new low-income units in either version. The Senate version would cut funding for about 25 percent of currently-assisted units. Both bills include cuts in operating subsidies which will further jeopardize existing public housing units which are already under-maintained.

Conclusion. Over the past two or three years, homeless families--families living in the streets, families living in cars, families living in shelters--seemingly appeared out of nowhere. As stories about them began to appear in the news media, we, as a public, were shocked. We asked, "Why--why are there homeless families?"

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[2] HUD defines "very low income" as less than 50 percent of the renter median income and "affordable" as 30 percent of a very low-income household's income.

The answer to that is now obvious. Given the rapid increase in poverty among families since 1979 and the accompanying decrease in the availability of housing they could afford, it's surprising that there aren't more homeless families than we see now. Instead, the question we probably should have been asking over the last few years is, "Of all the families at high risk of having no place to live, *which* families actually become homeless?"

This is the question the USC Homeless Families Project has been trying to answer. Based on the data we have gathered in interviews with 87 homeless families in five Los Angeles shelters, I will present some answers to that question--*which* families become homeless--in the second article in this series, in the next issue of *Family Professional*.

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New Findings on Homeless Families

by

Kay Young McChesney[1]
University of Southern California

In the last issue of Family Professional, I argued that the current crisis in homelessness among families is the result of a shift in the balance between the number of low-income families and the amount of low-income housing available. By 1983, there were significantly more low-income families than there had been in 1979, while at the same time there was less low-cost housing. By 1985 Dolbeare (1986) estimated that there were about 8.1 million low-income households competing for about 4.2 million low-cost housing units, for a shortfall of about four million units. Since many low-income households were families, massive numbers of families--mothers and children, couples and children--were at-risk of becoming homeless. However, while these numbers explain why, in the 1980s, there were suddenly homeless families, they don't tell us which of the many low-income families at-risk actually became homeless.

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[1] Director, USC Homeless Families Project, Social Science Research Institute, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089-1111; (213) 743-2966. The Homeless Families Project was funded by the Ford Foundation, grant #850-0590.

When I began to investigate this problem in late 1984, I found that virtually nothing was known about homeless families. There was considerable literature on homeless alcoholics, and there was a growing body of information on the psychiatrically disabled homeless, but I could locate no literature at all on homeless families, except for service provider reports that there were homeless families, and that their number seemed to be growing (Stoner, 1983). Consequently, the USC Homeless Families Project was designed to be exploratory. The purpose of the study was to find out how families became homeless, and how they used extended kin, private and public resources to attempt to find new homes. The study was funded by the Ford Foundation in the spring of 1985.

USC Homeless Families Project. Over the course of 16 months, from April 1985 through July of 1986, members of the project staff interviewed 87 mothers of children under the age of 18 in five shelters for homeless families in Los Angeles County. The shelters sampled were chosen to represent all major areas of the county. However, within each shelter mothers were selected for interviewing on a convenience basis. The statistics used in this article are from a subsample of 80 mothers who had at least one child under 18 with them in the shelter. Since the mothers sampled were not randomly selected, the statistics given in this article are descriptive of this sample only and cannot be inferred to represent the population of all sheltered homeless mothers in Los Angeles County.

We interviewed mothers, and sometimes their male partners, in the shelter. The interviews were loosely structured, ranging up to 3 hours in length, and were tape recorded in most cases. Where possible we did follow-up interviews with mothers, a few of which were as much as a year later. Project staff members also lived in three of the five shelters as participant observers. In addition to the tape-recorded interviews which were transcribed for qualitative analysis, we also collected some quantitative data, and in this article I will report primarily on the findings from the quantitative data.

Who are the homeless? In Los Angeles County the population was about 13 percent black, 53 percent caucasian non-Hispanic, 27 percent caucasian Hispanic, six percent Asian-Pacific and one percent American Indian as of 1980 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980). By comparison, mothers in our 1985-1986 sample were 55 percent black, 33 percent caucasian non-Hispanic, and nine percent Hispanic2, with no Asian-Pacific women and three (about three percent) American Indian women. Seventy percent were single mothers. Of the 30 percent that were in the shelter with male partners, two-thirds were in the shelter with their husbands. Mothers ranged in age from 18 to 45, with a median age of 28. About half were 26 to 35, with a quarter younger and a quarter older. The number of children under 18 ranged from one

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2 Since none of our interviewers were fluent in Spanish, Hispanic mothers who could not be interviewed in English were not included in the sample. Consequently, Hispanic mothers were systematically underrepresented in our sample.

to five, with a median of two. The mothers averaged slightly less than two children under 18 with them in the shelter, with children not in the shelter being cared for most often by relatives or the children's fathers.

How Families Became Homeless. We found that for most families becoming homeless could be described as a process--a series of events that eventually led to living on the street, in a car or in a shelter for homeless families. Most families in the sample were poor long before they became homeless; they had often been barely 'making it' for some time before their episode of homelessness began. Then, on top of all the usual strains of poverty, an additional adverse event, which we termed a 'precipitating event,' occurred that upset their already precarious economic balance and eventually led to homelessness.

Precipitating events. These precipitating events could be divided into two types: economic events and relationship events. Where a family became homeless because they did not have enough money to continue to pay for available shelter at market rates, for example, they were evicted or their AFDC check was stolen, the precipitating event was defined as an 'economic event'. Where a mother and her children left home or were thrown out of their home because of difficulties in a relationship, most often difficulties with a male partner, the precipitating event was defined as a 'relationship event'.

Economic events. About 75 percent of the sample became homeless because of economic events. For about 40 percent of the families in the sample the precipitating event leading to homelessness was either legal eviction or threat of eviction. While some families were evicted from their own apartments, many were already doubled up with another family and were evicted along with the family whose apartment they were sharing. Another third of the sample became homeless because of economic events that occurred while they were in the process of moving. Most often, these families were in the process of moving to Los Angeles when their money was stolen, they ran out of money, or they found that they simply didn't have enough money to be able to move into an apartment in Los Angeles. Many of the married couples were in this latter group. Often the husband had lost his job in another state, and when his unemployment ran out, he decided to move his family to California to look for work. Once here, the family, without any remaining funds because of the expense of moving, lived in their car until they found their way into a shelter for homeless families.

Relationship events. The remaining 26 percent of the mothers in the sample became homeless because of relationship troubles. The majority of these women became homeless when they left abusive male partners, while some had been thrown out or locked out by husbands or boyfriends. Since by definition these mothers arrived in the shelter without the men they had been living with, there were no couples among this third of the sample. Also, the few women who had not been living in poverty prior to their episode of homelessness tended to be from this group. Some of these mothers had been living with men who were supporting them in reasonable fashion. However, once these mothers either left or were thrown out by their men, they were without any resources of their own. Consequently, although the precipitating event that began their episode of homelessness wasn't economic, once homeless, they too were without enough money to purchase shelter at current market rates. Thus, all the families in the sample were ultimately homeless because they were too poor to be able to afford rental housing at market rates.

Parents and Sibs as Resources. In the process of trying to stave off homelessness, families tried many varied and creative means to shelter themselves and their children. However, where possible, families routinely turned to their families of origin first, and they used them as resources in an age-graded way. For example, I found that young women who had young siblings tended to rely on their parents as their only resource for shelter; their siblings were often still at home and weren't established enough to be of assistance. Women in their late twenties or thirties tended to rely more on siblings and less on their parents for assistance. And a few of the oldest women in their forties had children who were old enough to have apartments and provide a source of shelter.

However, what was most striking about the families in the sample was the fact that in the main, they could not call on their families of origin as resources. There were three major reasons that they could not rely on kin to provide emergency or transitional shelter and thus ended up in a shelter for homeless families: either their parents were dead, their parents and siblings didn't live in the Los Angeles area, or their parents and siblings were estranged.

No Living Kin. Considering the median age of the women (28), mothers in the sample had a surprisingly high number of deceased parents. Several women in the sample talked about how when their friends had problems, their friends could turn to their parents, but when they had problems, there was no one to turn to. Thirty percent of the women had deceased mothers, with three women not knowing enough about their mothers to know whether they were alive or dead, making about a third of the women effectively with deceased mothers. Thirty-five percent of the women's natural fathers were dead, and another six women knew so little about their fathers that they didn't know whether they were alive or dead, making a total of 43% effectively with deceased fathers. Fully sixteen percent of the women were actually orphans, with both parents deceased, and five mothers were not only orphans but also had no living siblings.

No Proximate Kin. Of mothers who had living parents, many had families that lived too far away to be of assistance. One afternoon, for example, I interviewed three unrelated women all of whom happened to be from Detroit, and none of whom had any kin any closer than Detroit. This was a fairly common problem. Of those with living parents, only 50 percent of the women in the sample had a mother in the Los Angeles area, while only 35 percent had a father in the Los Angeles area. Forty-four percent of the women in the sample had no siblings in the Los Angeles area.

Estranged Kin. Of those families in the sample that had living kin in the Los Angeles area, many were so estranged from their families of origin that their parents and siblings refused them any support. Forty-three percent of the mothers in the sample had been runaways or in foster or institutional care when they were children or teenagers. Many of these mothers had been severely physically and/or sexually abused as children, and had received such poor treatment in the foster system (often being sexually abused by foster fathers) that they ran away and became homeless teenagers. Now, as we interviewed them in shelters for homeless families, they were young mothers with literally no one to turn to, no education, and no work experience.

Summary of Findings. In summary, major findings from the USC Homeless Families Project include: (1) minority families and single-mother families were disproportionately represented in our sample, (2) most families were very low-income before their episode of homelessness began, (3) while the homelessness of all sampled families was ultimately due to lack of enough money to purchase rental housing at market rates, the event that 'precipitated' the episode of homelessness was eviction for about 40 percent of the sample, a combination of economic troubles superimposed on migration for about a third of the sample, and relationship difficulties with male partners for about 26 percent of the sample, and (4) families in the sample were unable to turn to their families of origin for assistance because their kin were either deceased, out of town or estranged from them.

One important implication of these findings is that they suggest that of all the families at-risk of becoming homeless because they are poor, families that don't have access to the resources of a kin network may be the ones most likely to become homeless.

Policy Implications. In light of the growing problem of homeless families in the U.S., these new findings on homeless families have important implications for family policy and poverty policy at the local, state and federal levels. In the next issue of the Family Professional, in the third and last article in this series, I will relate these findings to current family and poverty policy issues and discuss possible recommendations for changes in policy and political action on behalf of homeless and poor families.

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Paths to Family Homelessness

by

Kay Young McChesney[1]
University of Southern California

The current crisis in homelessness among families[2] is the result of an increase in the number of low-income families and a decrease in the amount of low-income housing. By 1983, there were 25 percent *more* families living below the poverty line than there had been in 1979[1], while at the same time there were *less* low-cost housing units available[2]. In conjunction with these structural changes, service providers began to report that they were seeing homeless families in significant numbers for the first time since the depression, and that their number seemed to be growing[3,4]. By 1985 Dolbeare[5] estimated that nationally there were about 8.1 million low-income households competing for about 4.2 million low-cost housing units, for a shortfall of about four million units. Many of these low-income households were families. Those who could increased the percentage of their income spent on rent, or doubled up with family or friends. The remainder became homeless.

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[1] Director, USC Homeless Families Project, Social Science Research Institute, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California 90089-1111; (213) 743-2966. The Homeless Families Project was funded by the Ford Foundation, grant #850-0590.

[2] Throughout this paper, "family" will refer to a single mother or a couple with one or more children under the age of 18.

The purpose of this study was to describe how and why families became homeless. Over the course of 16 months, from April 1985 through July of 1986, members of the project staff interviewed 87 mothers of children under the age of 18 in five shelters for homeless families in Los Angeles County. The shelters sampled were chosen to represent all major areas of the county. However, within each shelter mothers were selected for interviewing on a convenience basis. The statistics used in this article are from a subsample of 80 mothers who had at least one child under 18 with them in the shelter. Mothers, and sometimes their male partners, were initially interviewed in the shelter. The interviews were loosely structured, ranging up to 3 hours in length, and were tape recorded in most cases. Families were followed for as long as possible following the initial interview. Project staff members also lived in three of the five shelters as participant observers. The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed for qualitative analysis, and quantitative data were also collected.

Most of the families in the sample had been poor long before they became homeless; they had often been barely 'making it' for some time. Before becoming homeless, the round of their daily lives seemed to be measured from crisis to crisis rather than week to week or month to month; almost always the crisis had to do with lack of money. Attempts to make do, to manage, to cope, were shaped by the structure of the family and the resourcefulness of mothers and their spouses. But these efforts never seemed sufficient to overcome the basic lack of money. 'Solutions' were transitory; 'successes' were temporary; the crises did not stop, and eventually the family became homeless.

Four types of families emerged from my analysis of women's accounts of the histories of their poverty prior to homelessness: unemployed couples, mothers leaving relationships, AFDC mothers and mothers who had been homeless teens. This typology was based on the source of money income prior to homelessness and the characteristics of the primary earner of that income. Not every family in the study fit one of these four types, although most did. Consequently, these descriptions of the circumstances of family economic support prior to homelessness are meant to be seen as ideal types, rather than exhaustive categories.

Unemployed Couples

Marginal men--sometimes employed, sometimes not--were the wage earners in unemployed couples. Their ability to support their families depended on the economic busines cycle[6,7]. In good times they worked. In bad times, without enough skills to find permanent jobs in the information age, and without enough luck to have been able to keep their jobs from the industrial age, they depended on occasional work and unemployment benefits to support their families. When no work could be found and unemployment benefits ran out, unemployed couples in some states, including California, could turn to the AFDC-Unemployed Parent (AFDC-UP) program. Unemployed couples in the twenty-five states that did not have AFDC-UP had nothing to turn to.

A typical family classified in the unemployed couple category was a white married couple in their thirties with two or more children, at least one of whom was of school age, where the husband had previously worked full-time at a job which had enabled him to support the family, usually a blue-collar job in a declining industry, for example, as a construction worker, a welder, or a machinist. There were two types of unemployed couples in the study sample: those who lived and had become unemployed locally, and those who had previously lived and become unemployed elsewhere, and were migrating to Los Angeles to look for work.

These were traditional families; both partners felt that it was the husband's job to support the family, while it was the wife's job to tend the children. This division of labor was even maintained in the shelter, where men went out to look for work, while women stayed behind to care for children. Unemployed couples were either legally married or the women considered their partners to be common-law husbands. In these families, the husband seemed to be functioning as the traditional "head of household" of census terminology. By contrast, in families classified in the AFDC mothers type, the mothers seemed to be in charge. Their male companions, usually termed 'boyfriends' by mothers, had never supported the family and seemed peripheral to the central mother-and-children unit.

I will use "Gypsy" and "Richard" as an example of the unemployed couples group. Gypsy was a short, overweight woman with an air of authority and a lively twinkle in her eyes. Most of her front teeth were missing, with the few remaining ones badly decayed. With her long black hair streaked with gray, she looked as though she was in her fifties, although she was actually only 39. She looked Indian, and during the interview she told me she was full-blooded Cherokee. She was in the East Bay shelter for homeless families with a ten-year old daughter and an eight-year old son by a previous marriage, and with her common-law husband, Richard. She picked the code name of "Gypsalina," which I shortened to Gypsy.

Gypsy and Richard had been together for five years. When I interviewed her, Richard was out of the shelter because he had gone to apply for a job, but Gypsy had little hope that he'd be successful, "He's a marine machinist. He worked in the Southwest Marina that used to be Bethlehem Steel, he worked there off and on for ten years and now he just can't get a job in his field." Richard's last job had ended well over a year ago,

> You know the newspaper, _________, he was working for them and he was putting out the new racks and repairing them and everything else. For three months he worked almost night and day and I think he had two days off and he was gone from dawn 'til maybe midnight or one or two o'clock at night, just coming home for lunch and dinner if he was in the area. Once he got all the machines caught up

> and fixed and everything, they phased out that job.

Gypsy said she had narcolepsy, and was unable to work, although she was a licensed R.N.

After Richard was laid off from the newspaper, he and Gypsy "just happened to look into managing the motel [where they] were staying," and were offered the job. For nine months they managed the motel, which gave them a small monthly salary and a place to live. After nine months the owner closed the motel for remodeling, promising them their job back when it reopened. Originally, the remodeling was supposed to take about six weeks. At that point, about a year preceding the interview, they had $2,000 saved.

When the motel closed, the family moved into a rented three-bedroom home with Richard's mother and her boyfriend. It was pretty crowded,

> She had my sister-in-law and her six kids there...it was eight kids [counting Gypsy's two], my husband, myself, my sister-in-law, my mother-in-law and her boyfriend...It was a three-bedroom house.

Even so, with three families sharing the house ("tripling up"), they were managing,

> My sister-in-law had her AFDC, my mother-in-law had her job, she made a hundred and ten a week and so did her boyfriend and we were splitting everything three ways, 'til they raised the rent. Her rent was six [hundred]-fifty and they raised to eight [hundred]-fifty with the two extra families.

Even with three families, they couldn't afford that rent, so Gypsy, Richard and the two children had to leave. At about this time Richard discovered that the owner of the motel had reopened it without telling them and had hired a new manager. By this time they had pretty much exhausted their savings.

So, Gypsy and Richard moved in to the two-bedroom apartment of a friend,

> Well, we went to stay with a friend in Wilmington. He needed someone to help him because he'd just gotten out of the hospital and he was in a motorcycle accident and almost lost his life. He had a two-bedroom apartment. It was just him, and we stayed there with him while I was taking care of the house and everything.

At Christmas time, while they were living there, Richard got arrested for overdue traffic tickets that had gone to warrant. Since he didn't have any money to pay them, he had to go to jail for twenty days, and didn't get out until January. At that point, while Richard was in jail, Gypsy applied for AFDC and started receiving monthly checks for $587 a month for herself and the two children.

Richard got out of jail on January 17, but shortly thereafter, they had to move again,

> Well, we moved again because our friend, him and his girlfriend finally got together and she found out she was gonna have a baby so they got together and he had to move out of where he was because the landlord was renovating the building and instead of moving back, he found a place that was cheaper for him and her--a one-bedroom place.

So they moved in with another friend who had a two-bedroom apartment "who was going to jail. He thought he was going to jail for six months and we were gonna take over his payments. We paid his utility bill up for him which was two hundred and eighty-one dollars because they turned it off and somebody had broken the meter." In the end the friend didn't have to go to jail, and they stayed there with him. Under rent control his place was only $250 a month, so they paid the rent and he paid the utilities. However, after four months, the friend's landlady evicted them in order to remodel the apartment for her granddaughter.

When Gypsy and Richard and the two children moved out in advance of the eviction, they paid their gas and electric bills, and rented storage space for their furniture. That didn't leave them much money, since they were now living solely off of Gypsy's AFDC grant, and she had received a check for $294 on the first of July. So, at a cost of $170, they then moved to a motel for a week. On the tenth of July their car blew a rod, and they had no money to fix it, so they had to abandon it. By the end of the week in the motel, they were out of money, and couldn't get Gypsy's check for the fifteenth, because they had no address. They eventually ended up living in a riverbed for several nights before being "rescued" by a stranger. When the family that had taken them in was evicted a few days later, they were able to get into the East Bay shelter.

Richard was typical of the men in the unemployed couples group in that he had skills that had enabled him to support his family at times in the past. Further, there was no question about whether he wanted to work. As Gypsy explained, willingness was not the problem, "See he's been looking constantly." (This certainly seemed to be true. While I was in the shelter he regularly went out to apply for jobs.) The problem seemed to be the mismatch between the new structure of employment opportunity and Richard's skills and experience. There was no more Bethlehem Steel. The shipyards in the harbor where he had worked earlier in his life were pretty much dormant. Thus, there was no demand for the things he could do. On the other hand, he didn't have skills to move into new kinds of jobs. As Gypsy explained, "My husband, he's only got a tenth grade education. As a matter of fact when we first got together he could be classified as almost illiterate 'cause he could hardly read." With Gypsy's help, he had improved so that

> he can fill out applications and stuff now--he can do all that himself. He wants to be an accountant and he went to college for entrance testing and he got the highest grade on math, but when it came to the spelling and stuff like that he couldn't pass.

In the new employment market, Richard's skills and the willingness to work weren't enough. As a marginal worker, Richard was unable to achieve economic success in the employment market of the 1980s, and since Gypsy was unable to work due to her illness, access to the structure of economic opportunity was effectively blocked for this family. They had only AFDC and odd jobs to fall back on, and it wasn't enough to enable them to obtain stable housing. No matter what strategies they tried or how many people they shared housing with, in the end, given the structure of the housing market, they were unable to find affordable permanent housing, and became homeless.

Mothers Leaving Relationships

By the time mothers leaving relationships arrived in the shelter, they were, whether married or not, functioning as single mothers. They had previously been living with a male partner who had been supporting them. However, when they left (or were forced to leave) the relationship, they had no means to support themselves and their children. By leaving their men, they were setting up new female-headed families of their own. At the same time, being without an income of their own, they became newly poor. Thus, the pattern of poverty was quite different for this type of family. Whereas unemployed couples, AFDC mothers and mothers who had been homeless teens had all been poor for some time prior to their homelessness, mothers leaving relationships often had not been poor prior to homelessness. They became poor suddenly, simultaneously with their departure from husband or boyfriend.

The typical mother leaving a relationship was a woman in her late twenties with one or more children under the age of six who had been living in a stable housing arrangement with a man who was supporting the family adequately. Typically, she had a high school education and had worked before the birth of her first child, but had not worked outside the home for several years at the time she became homeless. She had no access to childcare.

When the relationship broke up, she suddenly found herself with no means of support and applied for AFDC on an emergency basis. Thus, the proximate cause of poverty for mothers leaving relationships was their break-up with an economically successful man. However, once the break-up occurred and the women became single mothers, their main obstacle to economic opportunity was lack of work. In turn, the obstacle to going back to work was lack of childcare. Typically, mothers leaving relationships had more education, skills and work experience than AFDC mothers and mothers who had been homeless teens, suggesting that their prospects for finding work were better, but like the other single mothers in the study, they didn't have childcare.

I will use the case of "Frances" as an example of a woman leaving a relationship. Frances was thirty-six, a wiry woman of medium height with dark roots showing through dyed blonde hair who was usually dressed in jeans and a T-shirt. She was a heavy smoker, so that she could usually be found out on the smoking porch of Christ Hope Shelter (no smoking was allowed anywhere else in the shelter). She said that her mother was Hispanic and her father was "white," so that she was a "half-breed." She spoke Spanish, but English was her primary language. She was in the shelter with her nine-year old daughter, Ellen.

Frances had been living with her boyfriend, Doug, who was the father of her five-year old daughter, for about two years. Doug was working for his stepfather, and they were living in an apartment owned by the stepfather. The stepfather didn't like

Frances. He told her that, "either I went or my old man didn't have a job with him no more and plus my five-year old would lose her inheritance that his stepfather was leaving for her if I stayed." Doug preferred security to Frances, and so she decided that she would leave. Essentially, the stepfather demanded that she have nothing more to do with the five-year old, and she reluctantly agreed because she felt that at least this way her little girl would have some of the things in life that she hadn't been able to provide.

She called around frantically, and finally a friend connected her to someone he knew, an elderly man, who said she and Ellen could stay with him. She paid him $105 on the agreement that she could stay for three weeks. However,

> After I paid him the last thirty dollars of the hundred and five dollars, he threw me out that night. That was all the money I had because I'd paid my bills that I had left over from the apartment that I was just thrown out of.

I'm not sure where she and Ellen spent that night. But Frances spent the next day at her sister's, using her telephone to call about places to stay. Frances called everybody she could think of. Finally she called her girlfriend:

> She [the girlfriend] talked to her old man. Him and I don't get along. We never have. So, he said I could stay there and pay them a hundred and fifty a month... I stayed there two nights. The second night I took a bus back to my town...[and] I get a phone call from her [the girlfriend] saying I can't come back.

This was on Sunday. When she got the phone call saying she couldn't go back she was frantic, and Doug was no help:

> ...all he said was, "Well, what the hell are you gonna do? You can't stay here, period. You can't spend one more night here." I told him, "Well, what do you suggest? Who do you suggest I call? I've been on the phone for over a week and haven't been able to find anything yet!" Now all of a sudden I've got until Sunday night to find a place and he's not gonna help me and he has no money, and I have no money.

Frances went back to her sister's house and spent the day calling, with no luck. Infoline[3] tried all over the county, but couldn't find anything.

> All I could think [of] is, "What am I gonna do? I'm broke, my clothes are in Pomona, I've got the clothes on my back, my child's got the clothes on her back. I've got no money, no place to go, no transportation."

Monday her best friend spent from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon calling, and getting "No," from everyone. Finally, late in the afternoon they discovered that Christ Hope shelter had two beds, but the shelter wouldn't promise that they'd accept her, because she had to come out and interview first[4]. By this time the girlfriend was in tears and Frances was "hysterical." Christ Hope shelter was in downtown, inner-city

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[3] Infoline is a 24 hour "hotline" service funded by the County of Los Angeles and by United Way. It's advertised (for example, in buses) as the place to call "when you need help," and calls are toll-free from all areas of the county. Counselors using extensive computerized information banks are trained to assist callers with problems ranging from suicide to rent-control. Families who need shelter stay on the telephone line while counselors call all the shelters for homeless families in the county to see if there are any vacancies.

[4] Interviewing in person is standard procedure for Christ Hope and several other shelters. The policy at Christ Hope, for example, is to screen out anyone who is mentally disabled or intoxicated. They feel that a shelter worker can make a much better judgment about who should be screened out and who is 'acceptable' when the interview is done in person rather than by phone.

Los Angeles, twenty miles away from the suburb Frances was calling from. By the time she got there by bus, it would be dark. Finally the girlfriend convinced the shelter worker to interview Frances for admission on the phone, because if she arrived in Los Angeles and wasn't accepted, she wouldn't have any way to get back and would have to spend the night on the street in downtown Los Angeles with her daughter, an even more dangerous proposition than spending the night on the street in the San Gabriel Valley. The shelter worker agreed, Frances borrowed the bus fare, and she and Ellen were admitted to the Christ Hope shelter.

AFDC Mothers

AFDC mothers included all families where the primary and customary source of income for a year or more prior to homelessness had been Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Most of these were single-mother families. Also included in this group were a few couples where the male partner had not been working and had relied on his female partner's AFDC check for support.

The typical mother in this group was black, single, had two or more children, had less than a high school education, had little to no work experience, and had been a long-term recipient of AFDC[5]. For mothers in this group, the history of poverty prior to homelessness was long; the pattern of poverty was chronic. Although their lives could also be measured from crisis to crisis, this pattern was not new and sudden, as with the mothers leaving relationships, nor was it broken by the interim respite of an odd job here or there, as it was for unemployed couples. These mothers were members of the long-term poor--the underclass. For them, multiple obstacles blocked access to the structure of economic opportunity. Most of these mothers were black. They had no access to childcare, but even if they had, because they lacked education, job skills and work experience, they had little hope of being able to find work that would pull them out of poverty. For them, given the structure of the housing market in the 1980s, the proximate cause of their homelessness was that amount of their AFDC check was insufficient to cover the cost of housing plus other necessities like food and diapers. I will use "Dee" as an example of an AFDC mother.

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[5] Numerically, this would be the largest group among the four types of families. Twenty-six percent of the study sample had been on AFDC for eight or more years (ranging up to 21

Dee was a tall, slender black woman whose distinguishing characteristic was her voice, which was so deep that it sounded like a man's (she was a heavy smoker). She was 28, and and was still legally married to the father of her nine-year old son and seven-year old daughter, although she hadn't lived with him for five years. She also had a three-year old by a boyfriend, but was on her own when I interviewed her. Dee's primary means of support had been AFDC during most of her nine years as a mother.

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years); another 36 percent of the sample had received AFDC for two to seven years.

Dee had been living on AFDC in a housing authority complex in Compton. She had paid only $112 a month for her two-bedroom unit, hundreds of dollars less than she would have had to pay for a unit not run by the housing authority. But there were problems:

> I had to move because of the environment. We had drug dealers in every apartment. We had gangs that would terrorize, you know, and mess with you, try to take your money, would come in your house and try to take control, would come in your house when you were gone. I was living by myself with my three kids and I just got scared. I called the Housing Authority and told them could they find me another place cause it was too rough over there and they said they couldn't help me--to leave the people alone. But it wasn't that simple, so I moved. I had to move.

She moved in with her sister-in-law in a town just outside of Los Angeles County. It was safe, but her sister-in-law had four kids, and with her three they had seven children and two adults in a two-bedroom apartment. She was able to stay three months, and save up some money, but it wasn't enough to get her a place out there.

So, Dee and her children moved in with another sister, back in Los Angeles. At her sister's two-bedroom apartment, the sister and her boyfriend slept in one bedroom, the sister's three kids slept in their bedroom, and Dee and her three kids slept in the living room. But again, there were problems. The boyfriend who lived with her sister:

> dealt with drugs...cocaine. Okay and my sister had got

> involved in it and I had got involved in it*. I was giving him the money to pay the rent, him and my sister, but then I found out a few months later that we were getting evicted. They wasn't paying the rent.

Both families were evicted. She had stayed there four months.

Through her sister Dee knew a woman who offered to let Dee and her kids move in with her. But again,

> she lets these people come into her house who's dealing drugs. I said, "This is pitiful. Every place I go--cocaine." And I had decided when I moved with her after the thing I went through with my sister [where she had gotten involved in cocaine and then decided she didn't like what it was doing to her], I said, "Well, I hope it'll be kinda better...I'll just stay in the other room and close the door." But see, the police kept coming in and out and finally they threatened to take my kids away from me if I didn't get out of her house...they threatened to take my kids because they know her from way back that she would be doing this and they would catch up with her sooner or later but for me to take my kids and go on or get my kids taken away from me.

Bit by bit, Dee had been slowly managing to save money from her AFDC checks. The problem was that although she had saved $400, it still wasn't enough to pay first and last month's rent on a place of her own.

However, all her hard work disappeared when she was robbed of her money in the middle of the night by drug friends of the woman she was staying with:

> [I was] asleep. All I know is somebody woke me up and told me to "give me the money." I said, "What money?" and when I said that she hit me in the head with an iron and took my money and wouldn't let me call the

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*Dee said she had never used drugs before, but said of this experience at her sister's, "You say, 'Well, God--everybody else's doing it, I'll do it too...we're staying here. We're paying rent, what the heck. Ain't nothing gonna happen.' But I learned different."

> paramedics or the police, threatened my life, threatened my kids' life and made me sit there...blood dripping all down and everything and made me sit there for at least an hour after they had did that and was telling me all what they was gonna do and all this.

After this was all over her "so-called friend" came out of her bedroom with her boyfriend, but wouldn't help her. So, she went to the elderly couple next door who called the paramedics who took her to a doctor. After all the threats to her life, she was too frightened to let anyone call the police. By the time she was stiched up it was early morning. She had no food, no money and nowhere to go. The doctor's office called Infoline for her. Infoline found a shelter that had room for them. So the doctor gave her the money for the bus, and they went to the Salvation Chapel.

The pattern of Dee's poverty was similar to that of other women classified as AFDC mothers. Typical of many, the fathers of her children either weren't working, or had a "little hustle" (illegal underground work) "on the side[7]." Consequently, she had been living on AFDC for years. While she wanted very much to stabilize her housing situation, she expected to remain on AFDC. Even if she had been able to find a job, she had no one to watch her children, and her oldest son had a serious case of sickle cell anemia, meaning that he had to be watched very carefully, and frequently went into crisis*.

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[7] The "little hustle" of Dee's husband, the father of her two older children, had caught up with him, and he was doing time in the penitentiary.

Mothers Who Had Been Homeless Teens

Mothers who had been homeless teenagers presented a pattern of poverty different from mothers in the other three groups. They tended to be younger, in their early twenties, and to have only one child, often an infant. Although some of them had received AFDC intermittently following the birth of their baby, their history of such aid was spotty compared to mothers classified in the "AFDC mothers" group, for whom this had been a steady and regular means of support. In addition, mothers who had been homeless teens were the only ones who had used the proceeds from underground economy work as a major source of support at some time in their histories.

The reason for their participation in underground economy work also seemed to stem from the pattern of their poverty. These mothers shared a history of severe abuse in their families of origin, which usually resulted in their placement in foster homes where they were sometimes sexually abused, and from which they ran away. As homeless teenagers, these young women had been legally unable to participate in the market economy. Living on the street, they learned subsistence prostitution, which became their major source of support. When their first child was born they became eligible for the first time for a legal source of income, AFDC. I will use "Vangie" as an example of a woman who was classified as part of this group.

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* While she was in Salvation Chapel, her son had gone into crisis, with a fever of 105.6 degrees. The paramedics were called and he was rushed to the hospital, where he remained while his mother moved to the Oak Street shelter.

When I interviewed Vangie in the Christ Hope Shelter she was 20. She was a slender, long-limbed young black woman, with a solemn, sad expression. She was in the shelter with a two-and-a-half year old daughter, Randy, her only child. She had never been married.

Vangie was born in rural Mississippi. She never knew her father, but thinks his last name was "Johnson." When Vangie was eight her mother moved to Los Angeles with Vangie and her younger brother. But things were tough once they arrived in Los Angeles. Vangie remembers that her mother "wasn't working" and that "she couldn't afford to send me back but she felt in her heart she couldn't afford to keep me." Eventually, "she got to the point where she started abusing us. She would just look at me and just lay her hands on me and she would just go off." This abuse continued, and Vangie eventually came to the attention of school authorities:

> I couldn't even go to school, because I would be on my way to school and...I would go to an arcade, or I would go to a park, just sitting all day long, just watching people, and sometimes I would cry, because I would hurt all over and I was ashamed to come to school with bruises on my body. And one day I just went to school--I was sitting in the classroom, and my body was hurting so bad that I just broke out crying, you know. And the teacher said, "What's wrong with you?" and I just told her, "Look", and lifted my

> shirt, and I had like extension cord marks on me. And they called the policy and my mother explained to the police, "Yes, I spanked my child, 'cause she's mine, and I will spank her again."

However, in her case, the police left it at that, and the beatings continued. Finally one day her mother said, "Can't take it no more--get out." So, at the age of 14, Vangie left home.

She lived in a local park for a week, sleeping in a scoreboard--"it was made like a little house"--in the baseball field of a local park, until she was arrested for being out past curfew. When the police picked her up, they took pictures of the extension cord scars. She was sent first to MacLaren Hall (the primary detention facility in Los Angeles County for status offenders), and from there went to her first foster home. In this home, "The man would come to molest me. And I would tell people and no one believed me, because he, he would tell me, "You're a liar." and, "You're gonna be punished for this!" and everyone thought I was lying."

Vangie ran away from that foster placement. She lived in the streets for three weeks until the police picked her up again and she was placed in another foster home. From then on was in and out of foster homes and girls' homes and was sexually abused in several of them. Eventually she became pregnant while living on the street, and was sent to a residential home for pregnant teenagers. At St. Margaret's, they gave her a high school diploma, although she was unable to read or write well enough to figure out which line on a job application was for her name or address. When she delivered her baby, she went back to the streets. She was now 17.

Eventually, she found a place to live in Compton behind an old man's house. She paid him $125 a month for it. But it wasn't much:

> I found an apartment, okay, and this wasn't really an apartment, it was a back house. It had roaches, rats, everything--I'm serious, dead serious...I had a ceiling that leaked. And when it rained, it rained--I mean like right in my bed, puddles of water.

But then her AFDC checks stopped coming (she didn't know why).

> My checks stopped coming and I couldn't pay him the rent and he told me I had to leave. I did not know the rule about eviction. I thought I had to leave. So, I left and I would keep coming back to sneak in there and sleep because I had nowhere to sleep.

At this point Vangie's daughter was not quite two years old, and she had Randy with her. The landlord called the police on Vangie because she and Randy were sneaking in to the back house to sleep at night, so she was back on the street with her little girl. I don't know how long Vangie and Randy lived in the streets before they got into the Christ Hope Shelter, but it may have been several months.

Vangie was typical of the group of mothers who had been homeless teens in that she shared the full history of physical abuse by her natural parents, sexual abuse in foster placement, extensive periods of street living during her teenage years, during which she had learned subsistence prostitution, and intermittent use of AFDC. Like most of these women, she had little education, no work experience other than turning tricks and possibly shoplifting, was totally estranged from her family, and cited her child as her only reason for living. Of all the four groups, these mothers seemed to have the least hope. They seemed alone in the world--totally bereft of anyone who cared about them or would help them. It seemed that there was little possibility that either they or their children would ever have a chance at making it in the world.

In summary, the four types of of homeless families--unemployed couples, mothers leaving relationships, AFDC mothers, and mothers who had been homeless teens--differed in the length of time they had been poor, and in the source of their poverty. In general, mothers leaving relationships had been poor for the shortest length of time, followed by unemployed couples, whose poverty had been intermittent. The length of poverty for AFDC mothers and mothers who had been homeless teens was related to age. Mothers who had been homeless teens typically began their spell of poverty when they began living on the streets as teenagers. AFDC mothers typically started their spell of poverty with the birth of their first child. Thus, for these two groups, the older the women, the longer they had been poor.

Study families shared a pattern of residential instability during their poverty. Analysis of accounts of living circumstances during the year or two prior to becoming homeless (roughly coinciding with the years 1984 through 1986) showed that for study families, being poor meant that they didn't have enough money to pay for permanent housing of their own. They doubled up with relatives, friends, and strangers, rented rooms, lived in motels and welfare hotels. They were constantly moving from one temporary housing arrangement to another with each new crisis in their lives. These crises were economically based. This pattern of residential instability as a correlate of poverty in the mid 1980s prior to homelessnesswas was typical of all of the family types in the study except for "mothers leaving relationships," who usually became poor at the same time they became homeless.

Perhaps the most important point to be made from this analysis of economic circumstances prior to homelessness is that the ultimate cause of homelessness for families in all four groups was poverty. Although the blockage of access to economic opportunity was somewhat different for each of the four types of homeless families, homelessness was simply another one of many consequences of family poverty. Thus, any new policies whose purpose is eliminating family homelessness must in reality be policies directed towards eliminating family poverty.

Policy Recommendations

The provision of emergency shelter for homeless families seems paramount. Los Angeles County, for example, has no federal, state, county or city shelters for homeless families. We interviewed mothers with infants as young as two weeks who had had to sleep on the street because there were no available beds in the privately funded shelters. Every shelter we worked in turned away families daily for lack of space. There is clearly a need for some kind of program to enable states or counties to set up emergency shelter systems for homeless families. Such a program should also include funds for ongoing operation and maintenance*.

However, if the larger problem is seen as family poverty in the context of a shortage of low-income housing, the provision of emergency shelter, while essential, will serve only as a stop-gap measure. In order to get at the root problem, policies to increase the availability of affordable housing or decrease the number of families who need it must be implemented. Both strategies are important. However, since strategies to improve the supply of low-cost housing are well-covered in other chapters in this volume, I will limit this discussion to strategies that work to decrease family poverty.

In order to be effective, strategies to decrease family poverty need to be tailored to the needs of the differing types of homeless families.

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* Funds to establish shelters seem to be easier to get than funds for operation and maintenance. At the same time concerned members of the community were scrambling to raise funds to establish new shelters in Los Angeles County, some already established shelters in the metropolitan area were being closed, while others were operating at half capacity, due to lack of operating funds.

Unemployed Couples

Men heading families classified as Unemployed Couples wanted work. White, male-headed households[10] have been found to be very sensitive to changes in overall economic growth. When the economy expands, their real wages, hours of work, and labor force participation all increase[8]. For these men, the primary approach to decreasing poverty might be macroeconomic policies that stimulate or strengthen the economy, thus increasing the number of jobs available. Retraining programs for skilled workers who had been employed in a declining industry would also be an important policy option. Retraining programs could be made mandatory--part of shut-down costs--for companies closing plants, for example. In addition, as far back as the WPA in 1935, direct job creation has been a successful counter-cyclical approach to unemployment[9]. Policies to make government the employer of last resort--to guarantee work to those who want it when work is unavailable in the private sector--would greatly benefit these families.

Absent work, two policy changes would improve the 'safety net' for unemployed couples. The extension of length of eligibility for unemployment benefits and/or raising the benefit levels, an approach that has been used during times of high unemployment, would improve the relative economic situation of these families, although it would leave most of them well under the poverty line. Finally, provision of AFDC-UP should be mandatory for all states. Although the percentage was not large, there were a number of two-parent families in our study who came to California from states that did not have AFDC-UP.

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[10] Most of the men in the Unemployed Couples group were white. Black and Latino males heading households are more likely to be out of the labor force completely, as opposed to being "marginal" workers as were the men in the Unemployed Couples group.

However, unlike men in unemployed couples, most single women who head their own households and have children under the age of eighteen would gain little from policies designed to increase the number of jobs available. Jobs are of no use without the opportunity to participate in the labor force, an opportunity denied them unless affordable childcare is available.

Mothers Leaving Relationships

Mothers leaving relationships seemed potentially more employable than single mothers in the other two groups. They had higher levels of education and more skills; some had never been on AFDC before, and relatively few had an extensive history of dependence on AFDC. Their entry into poverty was clearly "event-driven"[10] and they seemed most likely to be entering a short-term spell of poverty and therefore a short-term spell of AFDC dependency. Poverty among these mothers seemed most likely to be decreased by programs that would enable them to work, primarily programs to provide affordable childcare. While some mothers among this group might benefit from employment and training programs, historically, the more education and skills mothers in employment and training programs had, the less thev gained from them[11] so that childcare would probably be of greatest benefit to this group.

AFDC Mothers

AFDC mothers tended to have less education and less work experience than women classified as mothers leaving relationships. Consequently, childcare alone would probably be insufficient to enable these mothers to enter the labor market. Evaluations of past employment and training programs consistently showed the largest postprogram gains for "the most disadvantaged [women] with the least amount of previous labor market experience"[12]. In other words, employment and training programs have been found to yield the largest gains for the typical AFDC mother. However, the gains per participant were modest, suggesting that while such programs would at best move mothers only from the AFDC poor to the working poor.

In the absence of significant programs to provide childcare and employment and training, single mothers in the study subsisted on AFDC. However, while AFDC was clearly better than no income at all for mothers in the study, it was not sufficient to enable mothers to pay for permanent housing on the open market. Consequently, welfare reform is an important policy consideration for decreasing homelessness among AFDC mothers. In addition to the changes in AFDC-UP already mentioned, two other changes seem important. First, benefits need to be returned to Great Society levels. While social security levels were indexed for inflation during part of the 1970s, AFDC was not. The Congressional Budget Office[10] found that the real value (constant dollars) of the median state's maximum AFDC benefit for a four-person family fell from $599 in 1970 to $379[11] in 1985, a 37 percent decrease. Second, states should be required to support families at or above a federally set minimum benefit floor. In January, 1985, maximum benefits for a family of four ranged from a low of $120 in Mississippi to $800 in Alaska (California, at $660, ranked third in the nation). While none of these AFDC policy changes would come close to pushing AFDC families over the poverty line, they would reduce the amount of the "poverty gap".

Mothers Who Had Been Homeless Teenagers

Mothers who had been homeless teenagers seemed most likely to need "support and rehabilitative services attached to specialized housing alternatives[12]" in order to stabilize their lives, avoid recurrent homelessness, and prevent having their children become wards of the court. Like mothers leaving relationships, these mothers needed childcare, and like AFDC mothers, they would benefit from employment and training programs and would likely need income-transfer programs, probably for extended periods. In addition, however, voluntary programs providing transitional housing in a supportive environment where they could learn parenting skills, social skills and work skills would be highly beneficial to these mothers and their children.

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[11] Forty-three percent of the poverty threshold for a family of four.

In summary, homeless families are not all alike. Although all four types of families in this study were ultimately homeless because they were poor, the origins of their poverty differed. A broad class of policy options designed to increase labor market participation of family heads or to increase the amount of transfer income available to families would be of assistance to these families. However, programs that are targeted to the needs of specific types of homeless families are more likely to be effective in reducing poverty, and thus in reducing homelessness, than programs that treat all homeless families, or all homeless persons, alike.

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Response to Questions Posed by Chairman George Miller

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AT AMHERST

Social and Demographic
Research Institute

W-34 Machmer Hall
Amherst, MA 01003
(413) 545-3416, 3417, 3418

April 6, 1987

Mr. George Miller
Chairman, Select Committee on Children,
Youth and Families
385 House Office Building Annex 2
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Miller,

Enclosed, per your request, are the corrections to the transcript of my oral testimony at your committee's hearings on "The Crisis in Homelessness."

Your letter asks for my "for the record" answers to two questions, one concerning support systems and the other concerning flexibility of programs, that should be addressed in any proposed new legislation to aid the plight of homeless families. I respond as follows:

First, I think it bad policy to try to address the problems of homeless families apart from the larger problem of homelessness in society at large. To do so poses the risk of a large number of fragmented policies, each directed at small pieces of the overall problem, rather than a comprehensive, coordinated Federal attack on the problem as a whole. As things currently stand, we may well be headed towards one set of programs aimed at homeless families and children, another set of programs aimed at the homeless mentally ill, yet another set of programs aimed at homeless veterans, perhaps another set of programs aimed at homeless alcohol abusers, and no coherent set of policies aimed at homelessness itself.

Secondly, any serious, coherent attack on the problem of homelessness at large must begin by addressing the crisis in low income housing. The broad dimensions of the housing problem are sketched in my paper, "The Low Income Housing Supply and the Problem of Homelessness," a copy of which I enclose. There will be growing numbers of homeless people and of homeless families so long as the trends described in that paper continue; of that, one may be absolutely certain.

Your first specific question asks, "What support systems are necessary to allow families to remain together before an eviction becomes inevitable, while they are searching for temporary shelter, once they have found shelter, and finally in obtaining suitable, low cost housing?" The answer to the first and last parts of your question is clear: the necessary "support system" is more income. As to the second and third parts, the testimony of other witnesses at your hearings pointed to a very significant problem, namely, that the existing shelter system is not set up to provide shelter to intact families, either short or long term. There is a pressing need nationally to build shelters designed to address the unique needs of these intact but homeless families.

What would such a shelter look like? First, it would provide privacy and a sense of "territory" for the family. It would provide secure and quiet space for the children to do their homework. It would provide private cooking and eating quarters so that the family could share their meals in a more or less normal fashion. It would provide conjugal privacy for the adults. In short, such a shelter, ideally designed, would *be* a low income housing complex.

I, for better or worse, am a researcher, not a service provider, and so I have nothing specific to add in regard to your second question. The testimony of the service providers present at the hearing will, I am sure, be more informative than anything I would have to say.

Sincerely,

James D. Wright
Director of Research

Enclosure

JDW:td

THE LOW-INCOME HOUSING SUPPLY AND THE PROBLEM OF HOMELESSNESS*

by

James D. Wright and Julie Lam
Social and Demographic Research Institute
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

April, 1986

DRAFT: NOT FOR CITATION OR QUOTATION WITHOUT PERMISSION

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Introduction

Homelessness is a social problem that has begun to attract the attention of the popular media, academic researchers, advocacy groups, and social policy makers. There is little consensus even on the correct definition of "homelessness," much less on the precise magnitude of the problem. Indeed, current estimates of the homeless population vary from a low of about 350,000 to a high of 3 or 4 million. There is general agreement among most observers, however, that the numbers of homeless have increased, perhaps dramatically, in the past ten years.

Homeless people have always existed in American society, of course. Historically, this population was seen to consist mainly of "hoboes" (transient men who "rode the rails" and whose style of life was frequently romanticized in the pulp novels of an earlier era) and "Skid Row bums" (older, usually white, men whose capacity for independent existence had been compromised by chronic alcoholism.) Scholarly interest in Skid Row spawned an expansive ethnographic literature, but the homeless received no sustained policy attention; they and their problems were largely invisible to social policy makers and to the American public at large.

Today, the situation is different. Homeless and destitute people can be seen every day on the streets of any large American city; only the most callous remain oblivious to their existence. The traditional homeless population has been supplemented by what is now called the "new homeless," and it is this latter group that has been mainly responsible for the increased attention being given to the problem.

The nature of the "new homeless" is well illustrated by the changing demographic profile of the homeless population. One study (Wright et al.,

1985) has reported that the average age of a sample of homeless New York City men declined from 44.1 years to 36.5 years between the late 1960's and the early 1980's; during the same period, the fraction white dropped from 49% to 15%, and the average years of education increased from 9 to 11 years. As many others have also noted, the homeless population today is clearly much younger, better educated, and more heavily dominated by racial and ethnic minorities than in years past. There has also been an apparent increase in the numbers of homeless women and children.

What accounts for the apparently sharp increase in the numbers of homeless people? For that matter, is the trend even real, or is it an illusion created by the amount of public attention now focussed on the problem? We argue here that the increasing problem of homelessness is not illusory, that it is in fact a growing problem, moreover, that the problem was destined to grow (and is destined to continue growing) because of larger structural developments in society as a whole.

The argument can be quickly summarized: The past ten years have witnessed a virtual decimation of the low income housing supply in most large American cities. During the same period, the poverty population of the cities has increased substantially. Less low income housing for more low income people pre-destines an increase in the numbers without housing. The coming of the new homeless, in short, has been "in the cards" for years and will continue unabated so long as low income housing continues to disappear from the urban scene.

Our position, in a phrase, is that in the first line of analysis, homelessness is a housing problem. This perhaps seems too obvious to mention (much less to serve as a major theme), except that much that has been written about homelessness makes reference to the housing problem only in passing, the more basic focus being on problems of unemployment, or on deinstitutionalization and attendent issues of mental health, or on alcohol and other substance abuse, or on the cutbacks in social welfare spending by the Reagan administration. All of these, to be sure, are important factors; viewed structurally, however, the trends discussed here in the poverty housing supply and the poverty population conspire to create a housing "game" that increasing numbers are destined to lose. Much of the literature is focussed on who the "losers" are; our interest here is in the nature of the game itself [1].

Low Income Housing and the Poverty Population

That housing in the United States has become generally more expensive in recent decades will come as no surprise. The average price of single family dwellings sold in 1970 was $23,000; in 1980, the figure was $62,200, and in 1983, $70,300 (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1985: 729). More to the present point, the median gross monthly rent for renter-occupied units has shown an equivalent trend: in 1970, the median monthly rent was $108; in 1980, $243; and in 1983, $315 (Statistical Abstract, 1985: 736); in most cities, of course, low income housing consists almost exclusively of rental units.

The general effect of inflation on the supply of low income rental housing is illustrated by the trend in the total number of units nation-wide renting for $80 or less per month. In 1970, these units numbered some 5.5 million; in 1980, 1.1 million; and in 1983, 650,000 (Statistical Abstract, 1985: 736; see also Bassuk, 1984: 41). A family who could afford to spend no more than $80 per month on rent would therefore have seen its supply of potential housing cut nearly in half in the brief span of three years, and cut by nearly 90% over the longer term.

A second large-scale trend pertinent to the purposes of this paper, not quite so well known as the first, is the recent increase in the percentage of US citizens living at or below the poverty level. This percentage exceeded 20% up through the early 1960's, but had fallen to 14.7% by 1966 and to 12.6% by 1970. The rate hovered between 12.6% and 11.1% throughout the 1970's, with no obvious trend in either direction. Beginning in 1980, the poverty percentage started to climb. The 1980 figure, 13.0%, was the highest figure recorded since 1969, and the poverty rate has continued to climb since: to 14.0% in 1981, to 15.0% in 1982, and to 15.2% in 1983, higher even than the 1966 figure (Statistical Abstract, 1985: 454).

For present purposes, the period between 1980 and 1983 is of particular interest because it spans the emergence of public concern over the problem of homelessness. The rather sudden upwelling of concern can be indexed by the number of listings under "homelessness" in the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. In 1975, there were no listings. In 1980, there were also no listings. In 1981, there were 3 listings; in 1982, 15; in 1983, 21, and in 1984, 32. Clearly, during the early years of the 1980's, homelessness became a "hot topic."

Based on the evidence so far reviewed, this emerging concern over the problem is understandable. Indeed, it is a reasonable inference from these data that never before in postwar American history have so many poor people competed for so few affordable dwelling units. In itself, this is not news; much has been written in the past decade about the low-income housing crisis, especially in the big cities. What has not yet been discussed in adequate detail is the apparent connection between this housing crisis and the rise of the homelessness problem. The "new homeless," we suggest, are best conceptualized as the losers in this increasingly unfavorable housing competition.

The Situation in the Large Cities

Aggregate national data such as those so far discussed illustrate the broad outlines of the low-income housing "squeeze" but lack concrete detail of the sort readily available for specific cities through the Bureau of the Census' Annual Housing Surveys. These surveys are done periodically in all the nation's large cities, at roughly five year intervals. We focus here only on the twenty largest US cities, and within the group of 20, only on the 12 cities that were surveyed at least once in the 1980 - 1983 period. (Data for cities surveyed in 1984 and 1985 are not yet available.) The cities included in the analysis are Anaheim, Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Dallas, Detroit, Minneapolis, Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Washington DC.

The cities not included in this analysis bear some mention. First, the nation's three largest cities, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, are excluded. In both New York and Los Angeles, the homelessness problem is particularly severe. Seattle is also excluded; that city boasts the largest shelter for homeless men to be found anywhere in the nation west of the Mississippi River. (The other "top 20" cities excluded here are Cleveland, Houston, Milwaukee, and St. Louis.) Our sense is that the homelessness situation, on the average, is certainly no better in the cities excluded from this analysis than in the ones for which data are available [2].

The Annual Housing Surveys provide a wealth of detail on a city's housing stock, both rental and owner-occupied units. We focus here exclusively on the rental stock, and even more particularly, on the number of rental units available at various levels of gross monthly rent. All rental units, including publicly subsidized units, are included in these counts [3].

In order to work with concrete dollar values, we began with the official Federal poverty levels for a family of three persons in each of the years covered in this analysis (see Table One). We chose the three-person poverty line simply because the average US household consists of about three people. All cities covered here were surveyed at least once between 1977 and 1979, so we took the 1978 poverty level ($5784 for a family of three) as a baseline figure. All cities were re-surveyed in 1981, 1982, or 1983; the official poverty lines for these three years are also shown in the table.

The "official" Federal poverty lines are, of course, arbitrary and much-disputed values; we use them here only because they are available for use. Many observers (e.g., Beeghley, 1984) feel, rather strongly, that many households above the official poverty line live, nonetheless, in objectively impoverished conditions [4].

In order to get from the poverty figures to a maximum affordable gross monthly rent, and therefore to an estimate of the low income housing supply, we need some estimate of the maximum percentage of income a family can "afford" to spend on rent, and this is a tricky (and, again, rather contentious) question. Mortgage lenders and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development routinely recommend that a household spend no more than 25% of its income on housing. Stone (1983) makes the point that this would vary by income level: households with very large incomes can afford to spend more than 25% on housing, since plenty of cash would still remain for other expenditures; likewise, families with extremely low incomes might not be a to afford as much as 25% on housing if the remaining 75% were not adequate to cover other necessities. It is also true, empirically, than many poor families pay considerably more than 25% of their income on rent alone, whether they can "afford" to or not.

For present purposes, we will simply assume that poor households can afford to spend 40% (but no more than 40%) of their out-of-pocket cash income on housing. The calculation of the Federal poverty figures is itself based on the assumption that a poor family will spend a third of its income on food; spending another 40% on housing would leave only about a quarter of the income to be spent on all other things--on transportation, medical care, entertainment, clothing, education, and so on. Obviously, a poor family spending a third of its income on food and two-fifths on its housing is living very close to the economic edge under the best of circumstances.

Given the poverty lines and the 40%-on-housing assumption, the calculation of a maximum affordable gross monthly rent is straightforward. In 1978, the figure is $193 per month (40% of $5,784 divided by 12). In 1981, the figure is $242 a month; in 1982, $256 a month; and in 1983, $265 a month. The gross rent figures are reported in categories in the Annual Housing Surveys, so we rounded to the nearest category; the actual monthly rents used in the analysis are reported in Table One as "Rent Cutoffs."

These "rent cutoffs" in hand, it is an easy matter to count up the number of rental units in each city whose monthly cost is at or below the cutoff. These numbers are reported in the table as the number of low income rental units available in the city. We also report two measures of the size of each city's poverty population: the number of families below the poverty line and the number of individuals below the poverty line. Having begun with a hypothetical three-person household, we also report the number of poverty individuals divided by three. (In other words, this last entry simply cuts up the city's poverty population into arbitrary three-person units.)

The results are dramatic and, with only a few exceptions, very similar city to city. In almost all cases, each city registers a sharp decline in the number of low income housing units (as defined above) and a sharp increase in the number of low income people.

The general pattern is exemplified in the results for Detroit and Philadelphia, the two largest cities among these twelve. In the late 1970's, the Detroit housing stock included some 183,000 rental units within the means of a family at the poverty level; in the same era, there were some 58,000 poverty-level families and some 279,000 poor people. Even using our arbitrarily defined three-person "household" as the basic housing-consumer unit, the supply of low income housing still exceeded the low income housing demand, by an approximate factor of two.

By the early 1980's (1981, in the Detroit case), the number of low income housing units had declined to 135,000, which represents a 26% decline over the late-1970's value, while the number of poor people had increased to 522,000--an increase of some 87%. Again taking the arbitrary three-person unit as the measure of housing demand, the data suggest, as of the early 1980's, 174,000 "consumer units" competing for 135,000 affordable rentals. The apparent glut of low income housing in Detroit in the late 70's had disappeared by 1981, having been replaced by what appears to be an obvious and perhaps severe shortage.

The trends in Philadelphia are similar. Between the late 70's and the early 80's, the number of low income rental units in Philadelphia declined from 211,000 to 157,000--a decline of 26%. In the same period, the number of poor people increased from 516,000 to 708,000--an increase of 37%.

Across all 12 cities shown in the table, there were some 2,522,000 poor people at Time One and about 3,425,000 at Time Two. This is a percentage increase in the poverty population in these cities of 36%. At the same time, the number of low income rental units across all 12 cities declined from 1,607,000 units to 1,128,000 units--a decline of about 30%. Given these developments, it was inevitable that the trend lines would sooner or later cross, or in other words, that a time would come when there were more poor people than housing for them. That time arrived in the early 1980's, and the rise of the "new homeless" appears to have been one direct consequence.

It is, of course, true that the trends indicated in Table One do not logically require an increase in homelessness. An increase in the average number of poor people per unit is the obvious alternative, and there is some evidence to suggest that this has happened (Hartman, 1983: 24). There is, however, some limit to the number of bodies that can be squeezed into a single hovel, and perhaps the limit has been reached.

It is also true that the characteristics of the homeless population make them relatively less probable beneficiaries of any "doubling up" tendencies. Many, for example, are profoundly estranged from their families of origin and have few if any friends they could turn to. Many, likewise, are recently deinstitutionalized chronic mental patients, many of whom were institutionalized in the first place because their families no longer wanted them. Some are chronic alcoholics or drug users; some have extended prison records; and so on. As housing gets tighter and tighter, the elements of the poverty population just sketched will tend to be the first ones "turned out."

The "bottom line" to this discussion, in our opinion, is that between the late 1970's and the early 1980's, the poverty population increased quite sharply, while the supply of low income housing dwindled just as sharply; at virtually the same time, the visibility of the homelessness problem increased, as did the amount of attention devoted to the problem. It is hard to imagine that this is sheer coincidence.

Factors that Have Affected the Low Income Housing Supply

What accounts for the sudden and dramatic loss of low income housing in the large cities? It is obvious that the general rate of inflation in consumer prices for all commodities is a major villain, but it is not the whole story. Inflation will increase the price that must be paid for a particular housing unit, but at least the unit is still there. Not so the units bulldozed to the ground to make way for urban renewal or for the revitalization of "downtown." What we have witnessed in the past few years is not just an increase in the average price of rental housing, but an absolute loss of low income units through outright destruction or through conversion to other, more profitable uses.

The approximate dimensions of the rental housing loss have been estimated by Downs (1983: 77 - 78). Between 1974 and 1979, the net loss (units created less units withdrawn) averaged some 360,000 rental units annually. As Downs remarks, "nowhere near enough rental units were being constructed to replace those withdrawn from use" (p. 78). Hartman, in the same vein, has noted "the decreasing supply of rental housing because of inadequate construction levels, conversion of apartments to condominiums, and abandonment of rental units..." (1983: 17). Most observers would agree that this situation has worsened in the early years of the 1980's and that the lost rental units have been drawn very disproportionately from the low income housing stock, as Hartman's list of causal factors directly implies.

National data on the types of rental units being decimated apparently do not exist. There is a small literature on one particular type of low income unit bearing directly on our concerns: the so-called "single room occupancy" (SRO) boarding houses that have traditionally figured prominently as the "housing of last resort" for the socially and economically marginal population. The elimination of SRO housing has been called "a widespread trend across the country" (Special Committee on Aging, 1978: 24). Again, there are no national figures, but the numbers in specific cities provide some indication of the extent of the trend:

In San Francisco, a single development project (the Yerba Buena project) itself wiped out more than 4,000 units of SRO housing (Special Committee on Aging, 1978: iv). Various urban renewal efforts in Seattle caused a net loss of low income rentals amounting to some 16,200 units--half the downtown rental housing stock (_ibid_, p. 4). "New York suffered a 21% loss of rooms _in a sixteen month period_ in the late 1970's. Seattle suffered a loss of 15,000 units, while in Boston, the number of rooming houses dropped from almost 1000 to 37 in the past two decades" (Fodor, 1985: 3). In Nashville, "between September 1984 and December 1985, all but one of the few remaining SRO's were closed or demolished" (Nashville Coalition for the Homeless, 1986: 3). Similar patterns no doubt characterize a wide range of American cities.

The SRO's, and low income rental housing in general, have suffered considerably in the much-lauded effort to "revitalize the cities." A recent national study of the phenomenon (Newman and Owen, 1982) shows that, overall, some 5% of all residential moves in urban areas represent forced relocation (that is, unwanted displacement). According to one calculation, this represents some 2.5 million displaced persons _each year_ (Hartman, 1983: 21). Characteristics of the residentially displaced include high housing cost burdens (rents as a fraction of income), central city residence, being on welfare, and low levels of educational achievement. "The analysis produced a consistent picture of lower income families being most susceptible to displacement" (Newman and Owen, 1982: 2).

There are many factors that have been discussed in connection with the revitalization of downtown and its impact on the low income housing supply, of which three seem particularly important: _arson_, whose effect on the low income housing supply is only dimly appreciated; _abandonment_ and "disinvestment"; and _gentrification_. One recent study (Brady, 1983) bears particular attention: it confirms that all three of these factors are intimately connected and have had strongly deleterious effects on the stock of low income housing in many of the large cities.

"The deadly crime of arson is spreading at an alarming rate in the United States, leaving whole city neighborhoods devastated in its wake" (Brady, 1983: 1). The exact dimensions of the arson problem are obviously uncertain, but it is clear that arson has become an enormously large problem. Between 1951 and 1977, the number of arson reports to the National Fire Protection Association increased from 5,600 to some 177,000; these figures, in Brady's opinion, "understate the seriousness of the situation," since many arson fires are presumably never recognized as such (1983: 3).

It is equally clear that arson is not a random phenomenon; in Boston at least (and presumably elsewhere), "arson is tightly concentrated within certain poor Boston neighborhoods" (1983: 6). Even within arson-prone neighborhoods, there is a pattern: "Arson is more common in buildings owned by absentee landlords than in owner-occupied tenements," and is rare in public housing projects (1983: 6).

Brady also discusses the process of abandonment; as it happens, abandonment and arson are closely related. "More than half of Boston's 3,000 arson fires from 1978 to 1982 occurred in abandoned buildings" (1983: 9). Abandonment patterns, in turn, "follow closely the discriminatory mortgage-lending policies of banks which deny credit to certain districts of the inner city"--a process well-known as "red-lining" (1983: 10). Abandonment, that is, is a process by which capital is "disinvested" in the central cities and thus freed for more profitable reinvestment elsewhere.

In Brady's analysis, both arson and abandonment are also directly related to the gentrification of the central cities. Crudely put, gentrification is a process by which low income housing is converted to middle and upper middle class housing, often via conversion to condominiums or up-scale apartment complexes, or to commercial space for businesses serving a middle and upper middle class clientele. Gentrification thus lies at the heart of the efforts to "revitalize downtown."

There are, as Brady puts it, three main advantages to a developer considering conversion in having a "friendly fire" on the premises. First, a good blaze renders the building uninhabitable, which provides grounds for evicting the existing low income clientele. (Eviction of existing tenants is frequently the major obstacle to conversion in most cities.) Secondly, the same blaze guts the interior of the building and therefore undercuts a major cost of conversion. Finally, the insurance settlement on the fire provides ready capital to finance the renovation.

Brady quotes then City Councilman and now Mayor of Boston Ray Flynn: "I am convinced that there is a correlation between building conversion and arson. There is nothing so effective as fire for circumventing eviction procedures. Just look at the money being made by conversions. It is second only to the lottery in the amount of money you can make in one shot" (1983:17).

Brady, of course, is not the first to remark the effects of "urban revitalization" and associated processes on the low income housing supply. "Gentrification, condominium conversion, and abandonment exacerbate the [housing] problem by removing rental housing from the market, driving up rents in the remaining apartments, and uprooting tenants from their communities" (Atlas and Dreier, 1980: 14). The result is a "widening shortage of housing," particularly on the low income side. Likewise, Hartman enumerates the factors involved in the housing displacement of poor central city residents: "gentrification, undermaintenance, eviction, arson, rent increases, mortgage foreclosures, (...), conversions, demolition, 'planned shrinkage,' and historical preservation" (1983: 21).

In the 1960's and even in the early 1970's, families displaced by these "revitalization" processes would often be relocated, for better or worse, in publicly-subsidized low-income housing projects. In the late 1970's and especially in the 1980's, however, the Federal government drastically reduced its subsidies for the construction of low income housing (Atlas and Dreier, 1980: 23; see also Hartman, 1983: 1 - 3). Today, there is virtually no low income housing being built anywhere [5], and yet the demand (or rather, the need) for low income housing is, if anything, increasing. What, then, becomes of the displaced now that public housing is no longer a viable alternative? If the analysis reported here is even approximately correct, then some of displaced--no doubt, the most vulnerable among them--remain more or less permanently displaced, and these, we suggest, have come to be known as the "new homeless."

Conclusion

It was possible to write, as early as 1972, that "the United States is in the midst of a severe housing crisis" (Stone, 1972: 31). In ten years, the urban housing situation has changed from critical to catastrophic. The recent increase in the urban poverty population, coupled with a sharp reduction in the amount of available low income housing, have conspired to create a new class of urban homeless. Arising in tandem with the emergence of this class is a new tier of social service agencies, advocates, social workers, and others to minister to the human suffering that has resulted.

"What to do about homelessness?" is a question that now commands considerable attention among researchers, advocates, and social policy makers. Most of the answers that have so far been provided are ameliorative in character: the homeless need more and better shelters, food, community mental health services, alcohol education and counselling, medical care, job counselling and placement--and on through the list of basic human needs. All of these, to be sure, are genuine needs, and the effort to respond to them is compassionate and laudable. But, in the first instance, the homeless need housing, and nothing short of providing more low income housing will solve the homelessness problem [6].

The point, it appears, is not lost to the homeless themselves. Ball and Havassy (1984) have recently reported results from a "needs assessment" survey based on interviews with 112 homeless people in the San Fransisco area. In one question, respondents were asked to identify "the most important issues you face or problems you have trying to make it in San Fransisco or generally in life." "No place to live indoors" was the most common response, mentioned by 94%; "no money" was second, mentioned by 88%. These were the only responses mentioned by at least half the sample.

Every study yet done of the homeless has reported a range of social and personal pathologies. Depending upon sample, definitions, and the professional interests of the investigators, somewhere between 29% and 55% of the homeless are reported to have a serious drinking problem, somewhere between 10% and 30% are reported to have a problem with other substance dependencies, and somewhere between 20% and 84% are reported to be emotionally disturbed or mentally ill (Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Roundtable, 1983). Other common problems include prior criminal records, a history of psychiatric hospitalization, physical or sexual abuse as children, profound estrangement from family and friends, and so on.

In some sense, of course, these factors are appropriately cited as the "cause" of a person's homelessness, just as consistent bad luck can be cited as the "cause" of losing at cards. Given a game that some are destined to lose, in other words, it is appropriate to do research on who the losers turn out to be. But we should not mistake an analysis of the losers for an analysis of the game itself. The data reported here suggest that in a hypothetical world where there were no alcoholics, no drug addicts, no mentally ill, no deinstitutionalization movement, indeed, no personal or social pathologies at all, there would still be a formidable homelessness problem, simply because at this stage in American history, there is not enough low income housing to accomodate the poverty population. The new homeless, we suggest, are to be seen largely as victims of a housing economy that is, assuredly, not of their own making.

TABLE ONE

Trends in Low Income Housing and in the Poverty Population of Twelve Large US Cities

	77-79	1981	1982	1983
Poverty Level, Family of Three	5784	7250	7693	7938
40% of Poverty Level/12	193	242	256	265
Rent Cutoff	199	249	249	274
SMSA Totals				
1. Anaheim				
N, Low Income Units	44700	18900		
N, Low Income Families	17000	44000		
N, Low Income Persons	107000	215000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	35700	71700		
2. Atlanta				
N, Low Income Units	105300		71700	
N, Low Income Families	39000		69000	
N, Low Income Persons	183000		273000	
N, Low Income Persons/3	61000		91300	
3. Baltimore				
N, Low Income Units	74800			66300
N, Low Income Families	37000			43000
N, Low Income Persons	152000			233000
N, Low Income Persons/3	50700			77700
4. Boston				
N, Low Income Units	155300	112000		
N, Low Income Families	48000	49000		
N, Low Income Persons	297000	261000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	99000	87000		
5. Dallas				
N, Low Income Units	103200	82800		
N, Low Income Families	28000	47000		
N, Low Income Persons	127000	231000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	42300	77000		
6. Detroit				
N, Low Income Units	182900	135000		
N, Low Income Families	58000	115000		
N, Low Income Persons	279000	522000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	93000	174000		

	77-79	1981	1982	1983
7. Minneapolis				
N, Low Income Units	108100	75000		
N, Low Income Families	22000	20000		
N, Low Income Persons	108000	108000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	36000	36000		
8. Newark				
N, Low Income Units	94800	87300		
N, Low Income Families	45000	40000		
N, Low Income Persons	204000	183000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	68000	61000		
9. Philadelphia				
N, Low Income Units	211000		157000	
N, Low Income Families	116000		155000	
N, Low Income Persons	516000		708000	
N, Low Income Persons/3	172000		236000	
10. Pittsburgh				
N, Low Income Units	151100	107100		
N, Low Income Families	26000	32000		
N, Low Income Persons	123000	153000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	41000	51000		
11. San Francisco				
N, Low Income Units	174800		110500	
N, Low Income Families	43000		62000	
N, Low Income Persons	234000		288000	
N, Low Income Persons/3	78000		96000	
12. Washington DC				
N, Low Income Units	174000	104900		
N, Low Income Families	37000	48000		
N, Low Income Persons	192000	249000		
N, Low Income Persons/3	64000	83000		

SOURCES: All housing data reported here are taken from the US Bureau of the Census, Current Housing Reports: Housing Characteristics for Selected Metropolitan Areas, for various cities and years. The data on poverty families and individuals are taken from the US Bureau of the Census, Current Population Reports: Characteristics of the Population Below the Poverty Level, again for various cities and years.

Footnotes

[1] It would, of course, be wrong to say that homelessness is just a housing problem. Like every other social problem, this too is doubtlessly complex and caused or exacerbated by a large number of factors, chief among them being the factors just noted in the text. At the same time, it is also true that the low income housing situation, as analyzed here, forms the background against which other factors unfold. An inadequate low income housing supply is probably not the proximate cause of homelessness in most cases, but it is the ultimate cause of homelessness in all cases.

[2] In March, 1985, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pew Memorial Trust funded "Health Care for the Homeless" programs in each of 19 large US cities. One among many criteria used to select cities was the apparent severity of the homelessness problem in each city. In this connection, it is useful to note that seven of the twelve cities included in this analysis are also Johnson-Pew sites; among the remaining eight (of the twenty largest cities), six are Johnson-Pew sites. (The six remaining sites are not among the twenty largest US cities.)

[3] In the Annual Housing Surveys, "gross monthly rent" equals the contract rent plus the estimated monthly costs of utilities in units where utilities are not included in the contract rent. In publicly subsidized units, the amount of the subsidy is deducted from the gross monthly rent. The estimated gross monthly rents used in this paper therefore approximate the actual out-of-pocket housing costs to the tenant, regardless of whether utilities are or are not included in the rent and regardless of whether the unit is or is not subsidized.

It is a common misconception that most poor people receive at least some housing subsidy. In fact, the proportion of poor households living in subsidized units is only about 25 - 30% (Downs, 1983: 19 - 20).

[4] It is true, on the other hand, that the poverty calculation is based on personal income and does not make any allowance for "income in kind," that is, benefits received by poor persons from government social welfare programs. How to adjust the poverty figures for these benefits (known generically as "supplemental income programs," or SIP's) is a matter of much controversy. Beeghley (1984) provides a comprehensive discussion of these issues.

[5] Hartman has noted that the current "budget authority for HUD's low income housing programs is about 2 per cent of what it was when President Reagan took office" (1983: 1). Reagan's policies have "virtually ended all programs that directly add, through construction and substantial rehabilitation, to the stock of housing available to lower income households."

[6] This, of course, is not to argue that the problem of "housing the homeless" is a unidimensional one. Various groups within the homeless

population have unique and highly specialized housing needs. The housing needs of homeless chronically mentally ill persons will clearly not be met by simply building a new public housing project; the housing needs of homeless alcoholics will not be met by simply opening new flophouses or SRO's, etc. That many of the homeless suffer one or another disability (physical, mental, economic, or social), and therefore have specialized housing needs, does not, however, undercut our major point, that the principal need is for housing.

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ACNJ
Association For Children Of New Jersey

17 Academy St., Suite 709, Newark, NJ 07102 • 201/643-3876
P.O. Box 634, Bellmawr, NJ 08031 • 609/854-2661

As Congressman Coats requested: two copies of our report, Not Enough to Live On: A Survey of Living Costs and Conditions of Head Start Families in Newark, are enclosed.

Also attached, in reference to Mr. Coats' concerns, is a survey of current services (federal) available to homeless families and how those programs have decreased in relation to an increase in need.

Tricia Fagan

[Report entitled "Not Enough to Live On: A Survey of Living Costs and Conditions of Head Start Families in Newark," and a survey of current services (federal) available to homeless families and how those programs have decreased in relation to an increase in need, are retained in committee files].

ACNJ
Association For Children Of New Jersey

May 19, 1987

Honorable George Miller, Chairman
Select Committee on Children, Youth & Families
U.S. House of Representatives
Room 385, House Annex 2
Washington, D.C. 20515

JUN 6 [illegible]

Dear Mr. Miller:

I am writing in response to your two questions related to the hearing, "The Crisis in Homelessness: Effects on Children and Families:"

1. **What support systems are necessary to allow families to remain together:**

   - before an eviction becomes inevitable,
   - while they are searching for temporary shelter,
   - once they have found shelter, and, finally,
   - in obtaining suitable, low-cost housing?

2. **In any proposed legislation to prevent or ameliorate homelessness among families, what components should we consider to assure flexibility in meeting an individual family's needs and to prevent them from having to break up in order to receive services?**

   Before discussing any specific proposals for addressing the support needs of homeless or imminently homeless families, it must be stressed that there is a clear need for a strong national policy for family preservation. One key step in advancing such a policy would be revisions to P.L.96-272, the Federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act, which would specify that provision of housing and other basic needs is a necessary preventive step to be taken in order to avoid out-of-home placement. Provision of these needs should be in the form which best assists the family - ranging from direct short-term cash assistance (for back rent, for example) to emergency shelter or food assistance. Such a step would go a long way in clarifying that the intent of the Act is aimed at preserving families whenever possible and allowing for out-of-home placement only when a child is in actual danger in his or her home.

   For families, equally important to actually providing these services is the method in which they are provided. At this time, states vary as to how they provide emergency assistance to families, but in most states, it is an uncoordinated and disheartening system, at best.

   In New Jersey, for example, Title IV-A emergency assistance money is available through the county welfare system, limited emergency funds for some families is available through the Division of Youth & Family Services, money for preventing

17 Academy Street, Suite 709 Newark, New Jersey 07102 201/643-3876
Post Office Box 634 Bellmawr, New Jersey 08031 609/854-2661

homelessness among families is available through the Department of Community Affairs - and each of these various agencies have systemic red tape, rules and regulations that are prohibitive to families in need. No one entity is currently responsible for coordinating these existing services and providing case management to assist families facing emergencies such as homelessness and hunger. Parents, therefore, are forced to negotiate unwieldy and unnecessarily complicated systems in order to receive the assistance they need to maintain their families.

Another essential step needed is for the federal government to re-assume its historic commitment to low income housing. Programs which made affordable housing available to our least affluent families have been slashed more substantially than any other major federal activity over the past decade. In development of new subsidized units, for example, the total amount of units dropped from 321,000 in 1981 to 154,000 in 1983, and this trend continues. In addition, many formerly available subsidized units have been lost due to poor management and neglect which rendered the buildings uninhabitable. Existing HUD Section 8 vouchers are virtually unusable in many areas of the country since decent rental housing no longer exists within the HUD rental limits. In addition, within the next 5 years much of the limited existing affordable housing will be lost as owners of HUD-subsidized properties begin to exercise `pre-payment´ (i.e., early buyout) options.

There is a clear, demonstrated need for increased federal assistance in subsidizing, preserving, constructing and rehabilitation of affordable housing. Without this commitment, the number of homeless families in this country will continue to grow, since all the supports or services in the world cannot house families where housing does not exist.

With that said, there are some very specific supports that families in each of the circumstances you raise can benefit from:

A. **<u>To Prevent Eviction</u>**:

Several innovative programs exist which are successfully helping families to stay in their homes - particularly during times of temporary financial crisis. In New Jersey there have been at least two initiatives which, though limited in funding and scope, have proven to be relatively successful in preventing eviction. One is the use of Rent-Abatement monies to assist families threatened with imminent eviction (usually due to a dispute with a landlord over maintenance and utility matters). I have attached a summary of the Trenton, N.J., Rent Abatement Program for your information.

Another program, this one runs on a state-wide basis, is New Jersey´s Homelessness Prevention Program. This program provides direct funding assistance to families ranging from rent arrearages and related legal fees to mortgage payments or security deposits. Despite funding and administrative limitations, this program has helped to prevent eviction of families by providing the immediate, short-term funding needed to stabilize families in their homes. A copy of this program´s 1985 report (their most recent) is attached.

Families also need dependable, knowledgeable housing advocates in their communities who can assist them not only in mediating disputes with landlords, but by apprising them of their rights as tenants when they are threatened with eviction or displacement. A large number of evictions are illegal, but most families lack either the legal knowledge to know they can challenge an eviction or the money necessary to pursue the matter in court. Though Legal Services, Legal Aid and Tenants' Organizations exist in some communities as resources for families, many families are already homeless before they come to the attention of these groups.

Housing advocates, both to prevent homelessness and to assist those families losing their homes to find affordable, decent housing, should be an integral part of any human services delivery system.

Finally, there must be in place, both nationally and within the states, strong anti-discrimination and anti-displacement statutes. Our families need to be protected from the blatant discrimination they face in today's tight housing market as well as from current greedy and short-sighted market forces which are pushing families from the few existing affordable housing units to make way for condo conversion - without making adequate housing provisions available to those families.

B. Searching for Temporary Shelter, While in Temporary Shelter

We believe that families who become homeless for whatever reason should be guaranteed immediate, decent, safe temporary shelter by their federal, state and local governments. This shelter can be provided in a variety of ways: through use of Title IV-A Emergency Assistance funds, through creation of family shelters, or through hospitality networks in the community, to name a few options. The key component is that any family approaching a human service system because they are homeless should be immediately assisted in locating and paying for shelter.

While in temporary shelter, families need a variety of support services to enable them to maintain their families while searching for suitable housing. The range of needs is as varied as the many types of families that are homeless these days. Some basic supports/assistance, however, that are required include:

1) Assistance with defining their circumstances and drawing upon all resources that are available to them. Many homeless families are not receiving income maintenance, food stamp and other supports to which they are entitled, which could aid them in gaining some stability in their lives.

2) Shelters should offer a safe, secure base to families from which they can conduct their housing searches, and where their pre-school age children can be cared for while the parents are home-hunting. The vast majority of family shelters close down in the morning and do not re-open until the evening. What parent, single or otherwise, can be expected to conduct a serious housing search from pay phones while also carrying around their young children?

3) Families need to have knowledgeable workers assisting them in their housing searches. In the critically tight housing market facing families in New Jersey and many other portions of the country today, it is often impossible for a family to locate and obtain suitable housing in a reasonable period of time without assistance. In New Jersey there are a few community organizations which assist homeless people in locating housing. They have found that parents often need assistance with transportation (many

apartments merely advertise with FOR RENT signs in the windows) or with negotiating with landlords - who are more likely to rent to single parents when they are accompanied by a concerned agency representative who can vouch for the family. In today's market, supportive assistance in housing searches is essential.

4) Provisions must be made for school-aged children to be immediately placed in school or, if that is not immediately possible, provisions for appropriate daily tutoring must be made. This is a very important, and often overlooked issue. Many, if not most, school districts throughout the country require permanent addresses before a child can be enrolled in a school. Children without homes need the guaranteed stability that school can afford them. Many children are currently suffering educational as well as psychological set-backs - often permanent - because they are denied schooling or their schooling is delayed. We have heard of extremely bright children who are being held back one or two grades because they missed key instruction while homeless - and no remedial tutoring was made available. This should not be allowed to happen.

5) In light of the growing length of time that homeless families, realistically, must expect to spend in "temporary" shelter, accommodations must be made that allow them to maintain themselves in as close to "normal" family conditions as possible. In particular, families must have access to correct kitchen facilities from which they can prepare food and feed their children. Few hotels/motels where families are sheltered have any sort of kitchen facilities, with the result that homeless families are forced to spend exorbitant amounts of money for pre-prepared food or fast food of questionable nutritional value in order to feed their children.

6) Those families with special needs - whether for financial management counseling, medical attention, addiction problems, parenting assistance, job training or psychiatric supports - need to be linked up with appropriate corresponding community services. For female heads-of-households and recently unemployed blue collar workers, in particular, assistance in job training (or re-training) and employment placement could mean the difference between a family being able to maintain a home or finding themselves homeless, again.

C. Obtaining Suitable, Low-Income Housing

1) Again, many families need direct assistance in their housing search. This can take a variety of forms ranging from help with search strategies and transportation to direct landlord negotiations or contracts with existing realtors. Though families must assume responsibility for finding housing for themselves, it is both unreasonable and unjust in today's tight housing market for administrators, legislators or service workers to expect already over-burdened families to assume that responsibility without assistance.

2) Many families will require some sort of subsidization in order to locate housing for themselves. This can take a variety of forms ranging from one of the rare existing Section 8 subsidies to payment of security deposit by some outside entity to winning or buying a place in the subsidized housing that still exists. Some states, such as Massachusetss, have pilot programs where the state is heavily underwriting not only the initial security deposit, but the monthly rent as well - finding it to be more cost effective

in the long run to maintain these families rather than allow them to break up.

3) Many formerly homeless families will need substantial assistance in refurnishing their new homes. Most families lose all their furniture and household goods when they lose their apartments or houses - since they cannot afford storage costs. Only with community and government assistance can they pull together the essentials necessary for decent, daily living.

4) Some families may require on-going support services in home management, budgeting, parenting skills, mental health assistance, etc. A house alone does not guarantee family stability to a family that has been living on the edge. Realistic, compassionate and on-going supports must be available on an as-needed basis to the families.

5) Families may need preliminary assistance in negotiating their new community if they have found housing in a new neighborhood. They should be hooked up with existing community support networks.

Many of the support services mentioned also address the flexibility required to keep individual family units together. A basic issue that must be addressed, as well, is the fact that the vast majority of shelters available to homeless people today do not allow entire families to stay together. This is changing, slowly, but our service systems have yet to adequately recognize that whole families are suffering through homelessness and to adapt their facilities accordingly. Fathers and older male children should be able to stay with the mothers and other children.

Any new legislation must be mindful of the new face of the homeless population. Resources and programs already do exist which could meet many of the specific needs of homeless families today if only the family had ready access to them. Services should be coordinated and made easily available to families, where they are being sheltered. It is inefficient and self-defeating to set up human service delivery systems as mazes which force homeless people to exhaust their psychic and material resources in order to receive the minimum of emergency assistance they require.

Let us know if there is any additional way in which ACNJ can assist the Select Committee in its important work.

Sincerely,

Tricia Fagan

Tricia Fagan
Staff Associate

[Articles entitled "The Rent Abatement Program" from Division of Social Services, dated 1986, and "Preventing Homelessness In New Jersey" A Report on the First Year of Operation of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Homelessness Prevention Program, dated August, 1985, are retained in committee files].

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STAFF DIRECTOR

TELEPHONE: 226-7660

U.S. House of Representatives

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CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES
385 HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING ANNEX 2
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TELEPHONE: 226-7692

March 30, 1987

Nancy Boxill, Ph.D.
760 Ashby St., SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30310

Dear Dr. Boxill:

I want to express my personal appreciation to you for appearing before the Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families at our hearing, "The Crisis in Homelessness: Effects on Children and Families," held February 24, 1987, here in Washington. Your testimony was, indeed, important to our work.

The Committee is now in the process of editing the transcript of the hearing for publication. It would be helpful if you would go over the enclosed copy of your remarks to assure that it is accurate, and return it to us within three days with any necessary corrections.

It would also be helpful if you could answer the following questions for inclusion in the record:

1. What support systems are necessary to allow families to remain together before an eviction becomes inevitable, while they are searching for temporary shelter, once they have found shelter, and finally in obtaining suitable, low-cost housing?
2. In any proposed legislation to prevent or ameliorate homelessness among families, what components should we consider to assure flexibility in meeting an individual family's needs and to prevent them from having to break up in order to receive services?

Let me again express my thanks, and that of the other members of the Select Committee. Your participation contributed greatly toward making the hearing a success.

Sincerely,

George Miller

GEORGE MILLER
Chairman
Select Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families

GM/j

Enclosure

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS OF CONGRESSMAN GEORGE MILLER, FROM NANCY BOXILL

I. The cause of homelessness among single parent and two (2) parent families with children are varied. Therefore the support systems inteded to prevent the circumstance of humelessness must reflect a variety of needs. Variety is perhaps one of the crucial elements of any planned program. Affordable, accessable child care which includes provision for:

a. Infant Care
b. Extended day or after school care
c. Odd hour i.e., 3 - 11 p.m.

would prevent mothers to work without worry or excessive absences. Development of a low cost, private sector housing bank would permit families to be matched with available, suitable housing within their budgets.

A review of comparable worth job indexing with local communities would provide female heads of households the opportunity to seek and find employment that provides a decent standard of living. In short, the systemic causes of homelessness cannot be resolved on a less than systemic level. Fundamental change in our approach to guarantying American families the very basics of survival, food, clothing and shelter is needed.

II. Any proposed legislation must include some attempt at welfare reform with special attention to: Standard of Need; Presence of Fathers; Employment Restrictions, Extended Health and Day Care Benefits.